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Remembering 12,000 Years of History: Oral History, Indigenous Knowledge and Ways of Knowing in Northwestern North America

by

Heather Ann Harris ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Anthropology

Edmonton, Alberta
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Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommended to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *Remembering 12,000 Years of History: Oral History Indigenous Knowledge and Ways of Knowing in Northwestern North America* submitted by Heather Ann Harris in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology.

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Abstract

Western academia has a long history of ignoring or denying indigenous methods of creating knowledge. Anthropology, in particular, has claimed the authority to represent indigenous people and their knowledge implying the invalidity of indigenous exegesis. In this thesis I attempt to reassert an indigenous voice by challenging western epistemological traditions which often deny the systems of theory employed in indigenous ways of creating knowledge. I utilize late Pleistocene-early Holocene oral histories of the Gitxsan and related peoples to illustrate my contentions. Many western scholars have presented these narratives as "myths." I contest that representation, contending that the Gitxsan and related peoples have their own methods for validating oral histories. I also present corroborating western archaeological and paleoenvironmental evidence which reinforces my contentions. I conclude that the Gitxsan and related peoples have been able to maintain an oral historical record that reaches back through 12,000 years.

In this dissertation I argue that the position of the indigenous scholar within the western academy is paradoxical. Working within divergent western and indigenous worldviews, and the theories, methods and ethics which derive therefrom, makes the position of the indigenous scholar problematic. I present the idea that, within the range of indigenous and western worldviews, each has general principles which can be contrasted. Indigenous perspectives and approaches to knowledge creation are generally holistic, subjective and experiential while western ones include the principles of reductionism, objectivism and positivism with associated dualistic and evolutionary concepts. These principles have contributed to a situation in which the West has come to dominate much of the indigenous world politically and ideologically. In recent years, indigenous scholars have contested the representation of indigenous people and their knowledge by western scholars and have embarked upon a process of decolonization. That decolonization process has resulted in the development of indigenous scholarship based upon indigenous research agendas. Such research agendas call for new approaches to ethics, theory and method and new relationships with non-indigenous scholars studying indigenous topics.

This dissertation concludes with discussions of: the possibility of establishing the study of culture from an indigenous perspective; advancement of indigenous theory and method; the development of new approaches to the ethics of research in indigenous communities by both indigenous and non-indigenous scholars; and how indigenous scholars must negotiate a space in the western academy and the indigenous community.

Acknowledgments

Writing this thesis was like giving birth, only harder. I certainly wouldn't want to do this more than once. But it's done now.

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If there is one individual to whom I owe the most, from whom I learned the most, it is my late *hlums*, Antgwulilibiksxw, Mary Johnson, of Kispiox. She taught me many, many specific things but, most important of all, she taught me to thirst for knowledge and to recognize how little any of us knows. Dave Harris, the late Stanley Wilson, the late Alice Wilson, the late Martha Brown, the late Walter Blackwater and more than two hundred other Gitxsan taught me much.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: The Decolonization of Knowledge

From the beginning of my exercise in higher education I have been conflicted about my position as an indigenous person in the western education system. That conflict continues and has become especially evident as I work through the process of obtaining a Ph.D. - the ultimate indicator of success in an education system which opposes my own worldview, values, and ways of knowing. Most indigenous university students face this conflict. Some purport to "play the game" by writing and saying what they think their professors want to hear even if they do not believe it. They see this as the price one pays to acquire a degree which facilitates the attainment of certain goals. I have always refused to accept that.

Many of us who live in a colonial situation have things to say that we want heard. A degree is considered by many aboriginal people as a way to gain enough respect and authority in Canadian society to allow one to be heard. Often, aboriginal people see a degree as little more than that because of the perceived lack of value, usefulness, or applicability of much of the study they undertake for their own lives. I want my education to be relevant in spite of the difficulties I have faced in fitting into and understanding the academy. These difficulties are epitomized by the fact that I essentially did my master's degree twice. In 1980 I went to an eastern Canadian university where I completed the course work and the first draft of the thesis. I was told by my supervisor that I was "Too much into the culture and not enough into anthropology." I had mistakenly thought that anthropology was about the study of culture but it was made clear to me during my first experience as a graduate student that anthropology is only about the study of culture from a western perspective, that the indigenous perspective is irrelevant. Fortunately, I had a far more positive experience the second time I worked on an M.A. In this instance, I went to the anthropology program at the University of Alberta because of a book I read by faculty member, David Young. In *Cry of the Eagle*, Dr. Young contended that, although he is a western scientist, trained in the western scientific tradition, in his work with Cree medicine man, Russell Willier, he witnessed things which cannot be easily explained by western science. Dr. Young demonstrated an openness to non-western sources of knowledge by accepting that what he witnessed was real, in spite of his inability to explain it in western scientific terms. While studying at the University of Alberta with Dr. Young and others I had a very different experience than I had at the eastern university a decade before. Many of my teachers allowed, or even encouraged, the use of traditional knowledge. I had a rewarding experience, easily completing my M.A. with only very minor criticisms from my committee members.

Now that I am a Ph.D. student, I want my education to continue to be of real value to me and, I hope, of value to both the indigenous and non-indigenous academic communities. Towards that end, I will undertake an examination of indigenous worldview and ways of knowing using ancient oral histories from the northern Northwest Coast as an illustration. I will investigate the ways in which knowledge is perceived and constructed in the indigenous world, in other words, indigenous theory and method. I see this thesis as a step towards the development of an indigenous study of culture, an indigenous anthropology.

I believe that a greater understanding of indigenous knowledge, theory and method can contribute to both indigenous and western bodies of knowledge. Bringing the two intellectual traditions together can result in a new synergism of value to both. One of my objectives in undertaking this study is to argue that indigenous peoples have valid bodies of knowledge, yet ironically, I feel I am forced to "prove" it by presenting scientific evidence that correlates with the oral histories. In bringing indigenous perspectives on knowledge to academia, I hope to contribute to the development of indigenous scholarship - scholarship which has been largely unheard by western scholars. I do this by presenting a body of indigenous knowledge as it is understood by those with an indigenous worldview. I will demonstrate how the differences between the predominant western and indigenous worldviews and theoretical orientations can result in distinct interpretations of the same body of evidence.

Although I purport to be building an indigenous anthropology in this work, the concept of being an indigenous person and an anthropologist is a paradoxical one.

Anthropology has a long and continuing history of contributing to the colonization of indigenous peoples. To both work within an indigenous research agenda and fulfill the requirements of the academy is to be in a contradictory position. Many indigenous people, myself included, struggle with the dilemma of trying to facilitate well-being in our communities while working under the dictates of an institution of the society which oppresses us. There are many individuals within the academy who have contributed to the decolonization of indigenous peoples, but there are more who contribute to our on-going colonization. Universities are important institutions for the creation of western ideology - the ideology which makes our colonization possible, yet, many indigenous people, like myself, are working within the academy in an effort to contribute to our decolonization. We do this by deconstructing western accounts of our history and culture and by constructing our own. We do this by developing indigenous scholarship based on our own worldview and we do this while negotiating a space for ourselves within the academy.

Being An Indigenous Person in the Western Academy

Although I am from an old Red River Metis family, I was born in British Columbia and lived for many years in the Gitxsan village of Kispiox. I am a member of Kispiox Band, I married there, raised my children there and was a member of the community. I left Kispiox to attend graduate school and I am now working outside Gitxsan territory but I still have relatives in the community and maintain strong ties. For ten years I had the privilege to work as a researcher for the Gitxsan. Those ten years became an intensive period of study during which not only my work hours involved learning about Gitxsan culture. As community members found out that I was undertaking research on certain topics they began to seek me out in all kinds of settings to provide me with information they knew I was interested in. During that time I learned far more about Gitxsan culture than I know about my own.

While I worked for the Gitxsan I utilized four main bodies of information for my research. These were: information which had been collected by western researchers, information Gitxsan researchers had collected, the huge body of information recorded for and during the Delgamuukw land claim case, and original information gathered from over two hundred Gitxsan people I interviewed. In spite of what I learned, there was so much more I could know, so many more questions I had, so I decided to utilize my graduate studies to answer some of those questions. The most burning questions I had were regarding the oral histories. Primary among these questions regarding the oral histories was how could I convince academia that these stories, thousands of years old, were true histories, even in the western sense.

Although I am most familiar with the Gitxsan view of these stories, it is not possible to study them, especially the oldest ones, without reference to neighbouring peoples. The oldest stories sometimes involved people who eventually became the ancestors of a large number of peoples in northwestern North America. These stories represent a vast, deep and dense history which records the story of many peoples living over a huge area over a very long period of time. Because of this, the stories I will be discussing will refer to many peoples but I will focus on the Gitxsan and use Gitxsan terminologies. Much of the worldview and many of the cultural institutions of the peoples who share an ancient history with the Gitxsan are similar.

I began this study immersed in an indigenous worldview. I assumed that what the elders said about the oral histories was correct, after all, they were the experts on the subject. The elders said that the category of story called *adaa'ox* consisted of actual historical events. I did not find this difficult to believe because the stories did seem to relate historical events and the elders who related them seemed to be credible people. When I began to read recorded versions of the *adaa'ox* with comments upon them by those who are not members of the cultures whose stories they are, I found those comments incredible. Later, when I began investigating the subject, it was with the objective in mind of convincing western scholars that the *adaa'ox* had historical validity from a western perspective as well as from an indigenous perspective. For several years I struggled with this process. It was not a struggle because of lack of evidence. I still believe there is considerable western scientific evidence which convincingly corroborates the historical veracity of the *adaa'ox,* but my struggle was to understand western ways of knowing.

Throughout my many years of higher education I have found that theory was treated with such reverence that I had become mystified by it. I became convinced that it was beyond my grasp. I am not alone in this. Maori scholar, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999:29) contends, "the Western academy claims theory as thoroughly Western, ...has constructed all the rules by which the indigenous world has been theorized, indigenous voices have been overwhelmingly silenced." Like Smith, I could not understand the inner secrets of the western academy, in my case the discipline of anthropology, that would enlighten me about the differences between hypothesis and theory; where methodology ended and theory began; and other related questions. I have since come to understand that theory does not have a definition upon which all will agree; that hypothesis and theory overlap; that theory and method are not entirely distinct. According to philosopher of science and archeologist, James Bell, the distinctions between hypothesis, theory and law is subjective (1994:19). I have also come to understand that the demystification of western ways of knowing is part of the process of the decolonization of indigenous ways of knowing.

Divergent Views of Relatedness

The geographical and cultural area which is covered by this study has been determined by the oral histories themselves. Although I first learned some of the stories from the Gitxsan I soon found that the stories described relationships between a number of peoples in northwestern British Columbia and southeast Alaska and it is these relationships which delineate my study area. The peoples of the area do not always classify their cultures in the same way western anthropologists have. They recognize there are considerable differences between widely separated cultures but they generally see cultural differences on a continuum. The result is that the people of the area sometimes disagree with the classification of particular cultures within anthropologically defined culture areas. The peoples of the area I am considering in this study belong to the Northwest Coast, Cordilleran and Sub-arctic culture areas, according to anthropologists, but the peoples in these areas consider themselves related. They may share some aspects of social structure and material culture and diverge in others but they see themselves as connected primarily by history, a history of which many in western academia today have little awareness and to which few of their number have devoted any study.

The core area of my study only roughly corresponds to an anthropologically defined culture area. The Northwest Coast has been recognized as a unit with widely-shared culture traits since the early years of anthropology (Boas 1897:317). The delineation of the area has varied, but it has usually included the Pacific Coast from Yakutat Bay in Alaska to northern California (Suttles 1990:10-11). The northern Northwest Coast as a unit distinct from the southern coast has also been widely recognized (Suttles 1990:9). The core area of my study roughly corresponds to the northern Northwest Coast although it also includes some of the adjacent interior Dene peoples usually classified as

Subarctic (Helm 1981).

The peoples included in the core area of my study are the Tlingit, Haida, and Ts'imsian speakers of the northern Northwest Coast and some of the neighbouring Dene peoples as well. The oral histories indicate that the Ts'imsian, Gitxsan, Nisga'a, Wet'suwet'en, Tlingit, and Tahltan share considerable history; those groups also share some history with the Haida, Ts'ets'a'ut, Tagish, Tuchone, and the Haisla. The connections extend beyond the peoples I've just named but the Gitxsan are my starting point and their histories indicate these connections.

When I say that these peoples are connected or related, I mean that they share overlapping ancient origins. Their origins are overlapping rather than common in that each people has some origins in common and some which are different from those of the other peoples. None of the peoples of my study area has a single, unified history or origin story. Although the Gitxsan, Tsimshian and others see themselves as distinct peoples, they see their histories in terms of houses and clans. It is these smaller units which make up each people that record and relate their history, therefore, the history of the Gitxsan is composed of the history of the dozens of houses which make up the nation. A particular Gitxsan house may share part of their history with people who have since become Nisga'a, Wet'suwet'en or Haida.

The peoples of the study area consider themselves related in spite of the fact they are speakers of at least five distinct language families. The Tsimshian, Gitxsan and Nisga'a speak Tsimshian languages (Thompson and Kinkade 1990:31). Haida is a language isolate (Thompson and Kinkade 1990:31; Blackman 1990;240) and Tlingit may be as well (Thompson and Kinkade 1990:31) although it has been suggested Tlingit is remotely related to Eyak-Athapaskan (de Laguna 1990:203). The Haisla are Wakashan speakers (Thompson and Kinkade: 1990:39; Hamori-Torok 1990:306). The Tahltan, Wet'suwet'en, Ts'ets'a'ut, Tagish and Tuchone are Dene speaking (Krauss and Golla 1981:78-83). There is some uncertainty about the Inland Tlingit because although they speak Tlingit now, it has been said in the literature (McClellan 1981:469) that their ancestors were primarily Dene speaking until recently. It may be, as is the case with many of the peoples of concern in this study, that some kinship units which make up the nation are of Dene origin and others are of Tlingit origin. These peoples of disparate origin came together in ancient times to form communities and peoples. It is certain, though, that the "Inland Tlingit" do not consider themselves anything other than Tlingit (Kudegan Barrie, pers. com., 1997; Sealaska Corporation 1997).

Hearing the Adaa'ox

I first became interested in the oral histories when I lived in Kispiox. There and in other Gitxsan villages I heard my in-laws and other elders telling stories. The stories which they consider to be true histories are called *adaa'ox* in Gitxsanimx. The elders treat these stories with great reverence. The stories are told to educate young people about their family history and they are told as part of the process of maintaining ownership of family territories. Other kinds of stories which are not considered histories, called *andamatlasxw*, are more rarely related. It is the histories, the *adaa'ox*, which the elders consider most important.

Adaa'ox and *andamatlasxw* are the two kinds of narratives told by the Gitxsan. The *andamatlasxw* are stories which they do not necessarily say are true. David Harris, Xhlex, of the House of Ts'iibasaa, put it this way: "*Andamatlasxw* are half way between a joke and a lie but really they are true anyways." *Andamatlasxw* usually refers to stories about Raven, called Wii Gyet (Great Man) by the Gitxsan, but can also refer to stories people tell about everyday life as long as they fit the kind of characterization described by David Harris. That depiction fits the contradictions in Raven's character very well, indeed, as it does most of the rest of us at times. I see the Raven stories serving two main purposes; one is to provide cosmological explanations about the formation of the world as we know it and the other is to provide moral lessons regarding greed, envy, impatience, and other forms of human folly and excess.

But it is not *Wii Gyet* stories which are told most often by the Gitxsan. It is the *adaa'ox*. The literal translation of *adaa'ox* is "truth," but an appropriate interpretation is "oral history." In most cases it is easy, even for those with little experience of these stories, to tell which are *andamatlasxw* and which are *adaa'ox*. The *andamatlasxw* are full of the amusing supernatural adventures of Raven. The *adaa'ox*, on the other hand, often have no supernatural content; and frequently seem like historical narratives. Some *adaa'ox* contain what westerners would consider supernatural events, but always as part of an important historical incident.

Although the distinction between *adaa'ox* and *andamatlasxw* is clear for the Gitxsan, Tsimshian and Nisga'a, other peoples in the study area apparently categorize the stories differently. Because the distinction between *adaa'ox* and *andamatlasxw* is so important for the Gitxsan, I was interested to know if the other peoples of the area who share some of the same stories - *adaa'ox* and *andamatlasxw* alike - categorize stories in the same way or differently. Although I was interested in this question when I undertook my field research, I did not have enough opportunity to be certain of how the Haida categorized their stories traditionally or if they do have a clear system of categorization like the Gitxsan. I will relate what I learned about story types in the region from my own research and I will quote what others researchers have said regarding the subject.

According to Oscar Dennis, a Tahltan scholar, his people have a category of historical narratives, like the Gitxsan. They also have another category of story which can be sub-divided into two groups. Within this category are the Raven stories and other stories which are not about Raven but which contain the same kinds of moral lessons, particularly regarding respectful treatment of the environment and other people. Oscar thinks the names for these categories of stories may be forgotten.

John Enrico (1995:4) contends that the Haida have three types of stories which are *q'aygaang*, *q'ayaagaang* and *gi7ahlralaang* which he translates as myths, lineage histories and real history, respectively. Although I was unable to confirm Enrico's categorization of Haida stories, Enrico's work seems to be considered reputable by the Haida. Elders mentioned the reliability of Enrico's work at the elders meeting I attended at the Hot Springs and the forward to *Skidegate Haida Myths and Histories* (1995) was written by Guujaaw, president of the Council of the Haida Nation. What Haida elders at the Hot Springs told me and what Alaskan Haida elder, Willard Jones, told me was that any Haida can tell the stories now, although they probably were once owned by families.

Tlingit elder, Esther Shae, of Ketchikan told me that the Tlingit have two kinds of stories, like the Gitxsan. She said the Raven stories can be told by all Tlingit but the family-owned stories can only be told by family members. De Laguna (1960:16-17) also indicates that the Tlingit have a similar way of distinguishing story types to that of the Gitxsan. She maintains that the Tlingit say anyone can tell the Raven stories but stories of "supposedly historic events" should only be told by the members of the families involved in the events. McClellan claims that the peoples of the southern Yukon (Tagish, Tuchone and Tlingit) relate two kinds of stories. They tell "old time stories" (myths) about the time when animals were indistinguishable from humans and they tell "true stories" which are "closer to our idea of history" (1975:67). McClellan also claims that the Dene peoples with "Tlingit-type sib organization" each have a "jealously guarded set of sib traditions" (1975:67).

I was very interested in the question of the categorization of stories because what I know from personal experience in the communities is, at times, very different from the ways in which these stories have been perceived by some scholars. Categories which are devised by western theorists to include all story types may not be appropriate in the perspective of the peoples with whom I am concerned. The most commonly used terms - "myth" and "legend" are considered demeaning and insulting by indigenous people because those categories deny the historical and other values the people accord to the stories. The elaborate set of classifications used by Vansina (1985) would not be considered suitable by the Gitxsan for application to their stories because the division of stories into historical gossip, personal tradition, group accounts, traditions of origin and genesis, cumulative accounts, epics, tales, and other categories would be seen as arbitrary and irrelevant. To the Gitxsan it does not make sense for a non-culture member to apply his or her own criteria in categorizing Gitxsan stories in a way that contradicts those of the owners of the stories. To categorize or otherwise manipulate the stories in such a way that the meaning and integrity of the stories is subverted violates the *adaa'ox* which are such an important aspect of Gitxsan culture.

Because the importance of the *adaa'ox* to the Gitxsan was so obvious and because their historical veracity has usually been denied by theWest, when I began this thesis I set out to "prove" the historicity of the *adaa'ox.* The emphasis of the study eventually shifted away from "proving" the historical accuracy of the stories in western terms and toward an examination of the contradiction that exercise involved. Ironically, during the several years spent on this study, I have moved from not understanding the western concept of theory, to writing a thesis which is largely theoretical in orientation, albeit from an indigenous perspective. Because of that shift in emphasis, the oral histories have become an illustration of a theoretical principle rather than the focus of the thesis.

Although the focus of this dissertation has become theoretical, the oral histories are still the foundation. It is by studying these stories that I came to a clearer understanding of the similarities and differences between indigenous and western intellectual traditions. When I began this study I was interested in the historical "facts" which could be found within the *adaa'ox.* That validating these indigenous stories in western terms was my objective, indicates how convinced I was of the validity of the western worldview in which "facts" exist outside perception. I am still convinced that there is validity in western ways of creating knowledge just as I am still convinced that there is validity in indigenous ways of creating knowledge, but I have come to be aware that the two cannot always be reconciled, nor should they be. I have become aware that each has their own strengths and weaknesses and I have become aware that the recording of history orally is one of the great strengths of indigenous ways of knowing.

When I began to examine the academic literature on the oral histories of the Gitxsan and related people I found a large number of them had been collected by anthropologists and others, usually with comments on the content of the stories. Most stories were gathered during the early years of Northwest Coast anthropology from the 1880s to the 1920s. These form the main body of the oral narrative literature which I used in this thesis. Primary oral sources were also used but the literature was invaluable because it was extensive and some of the histories recorded there may no longer be known by living elders. I read many hundreds of oral narratives, looking for stories from the early period. The methods by which I identified the early stories will be described in more detail in the methodology section.

The recordings of Marius Barbeau and his Tsimshian partner, William Beynon, are the most valuable for my research. There are a number of published documents available (Barbeau 1929, 1950a, 1950b, 1953, 1961) but the Barbeau document most valuable for my work is an expansive four volume, unpublished collection of Gitxsan, Tsimshian, and Nisga'a *adaa'ox* which was obtained by the Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en Tribal Council and made available to me (Barbeau n.d.a, n.d.b, n.d.c, n.d.d). Some of these stories have been published (Barbeau 1928, 1929, 1950a, 1950b, 1961, 1973; Cove and MacDonald 1987; MacDonald and Cove 1987) but the unpublished versions were more useful to my work because of their arrangement into a rough chronology. This collection of several hundred stories is also valuable because it is arranged according to clan ownership with information given for each story regarding from whom it was collected, his or her hereditary name, where and when it was collected, and, often, the house and clan of the storyteller. This information is useful because it indicates the ownership of the story (since usually only members of the house which owns the story will tell it), and the reputation of the storyteller could often be confirmed by living elders. Another valuable aspect of Barbeau's unpublished collection is that the stories are all *adaa'ox*. They are not mixed with *andamatlasxw* as is the case in so many other collections. This is significant because of the distinct nature and purpose of the two types of stories and because of the importance the Gitxsan attach to that distinction.

I also draw upon James Deans' early work among the Haida. The stories he collected were compiled in his *Tales from the Totems of the Hidery* (1899). Swanton collected a considerable number of stories from the Haida (1905) and from the Tlingit (1908, 1909) as well. Boas' *Tsimshian Mythology* (1916) is another major work of the early period. There are also a number of smaller collections such as those by

Krause (1956), Teit (1909, 1921a, 1921b), and Hill-Tout (1898). I also drew on the more recently collected stories found in the works of Garfield and Forrest (1948), De Laguna (1960, 1972), McClellan (1975), and Duff (1959).

In recent years there have been a number of works published relating oral histories which were either initiated by First Nations or which were the result of very close collaborative efforts between researchers and First Nations organizations or individuals. Some of McClellan's (1987) and Cruikshank's (1991) work fall into this category, as does that of Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer (1987), Nyman and Leer (1993), and a volume, *Na Amwaaltga Ts'msiyeen*, published by the Tsimshian chiefs (1992). These writings are significant to my work because I believe they are more likely to present an indigenous perspective having been written by community members or on their behalf.

During my research I sought to identify stories which related events from the earliest time remembered. This was accomplished by three means. Gitxsan and some other elders are able to relate the histories in chronological order and, therefore, can indicate which stories describe events from the earliest period. Other stories I was able to identify as relating early events from paleoenvironmental descriptions which seem to describe environmental events and conditions of the Pleistocene-Holocene transition period. It was also possible to identify early stories by time markers, such as the "flood." The concept of time markers will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

Ethical Issues

As I examined the topic of oral histories as indigenous knowledge I found that the ethical issues of concern in this study are of two types: those specific to the ownership of materials utilized in this study and those more general in nature such as the question of representation and the potentially exploitative nature of anthropology. The ethical issue of the most immediate concern for this thesis is that of the ownership of the oral histories. Here I refer to the fact that the Gitxsan say only those who own the *adaa'ox* can tell them. No one else has the right to tell the stories without permission, in spite of the fact that it has been done many times by western scholars. To publish or repeat the *adaa'ox* without permission of those who own them is somewhat like breaking copyright law but the significance is greater because the importance of the histories is so profound to the owners. I have, in fact, been given permission to tell some *adaa'ox* but I will not commit them to writing because there is no guarantee that the permission given is permanent while the written word is. I will, therefore, not be repeating, quoting or paraphrasing the stories to any substantial degree. Gitxsan elders tell me that I can write or say what I learned from the oral histories but I cannot repeat the stories. That can be a fine line to walk and requires that work such as this be examined by knowledgeable Gitxsan. I have had three Gitxsan chiefs read what I have written about *adaa'ox* to ensure that I have not said too much. These chiefs are Xhlex, David Harris; Haaxw, Barb Clifton; and Meluulak, Alice Jeffery. Before this thesis is published I will have it reviewed again.

In addition to the question of the ownership of the oral histories, there are other ethical issues of broader significance to anthropology that I must address in this thesis. Primary among these is the implication of the unequal positions of power between indigenous peoples and the western scientists who interact with them. Anthropologists have come to be seen in the western world as the experts on indigenous societies (McGuire 1997:63; Smith *et al.* 2000:20). For example, in the Delgamuukw case, the Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en's land title action, the court called the chiefs "lay witnesses" while the anthropologists were the "expert witnesses." When the chiefs told their oral histories it was hearsay but when the anthropologists reorganized the information the chiefs provided them with it became "expert testimony." The expert witnesses in *Delgamuukw* were qualified as experts by the court based primarily on their academic qualifications rather than on their knowledge of the material upon which they were to testify. The anthropologists and most of the other witnesses designated "experts" by the court, testifying for the Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en, considered themselves cultural translators rather than experts, recognizing that the real expertise lay with the chiefs. According to Kidwell (1985:209), the knowledge systems of indigenous peoples have generally been dismissed by western courts, scientists, and the population at large as largely being myth and magic in spite of the self-evident fact that those knowledge systems have allowed indigenous peoples to survive for millennia.

The issue of unequal power between anthropologists or other western researchers, and the indigenous people they study, often emerges from discussions of representation. Non-indigenous experts, particularly anthropologists, have been accorded the authority by the West to represent Others back to the West. Some indigenous people have been suspicious and, sometimes, hostile to western researchers because they are unhappy with the way they have been represented by them and with the fact that they are considered less able to represent themselves than are scholars. It is only recently that indigenous people's opinions about the power of the West to represent them and the implications of that for control over the lives of the colonized has been widely heard. The Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith contends that, "the term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism" (1999:1). She continues, "imperialism has been perpetuated through the ways in which knowledge about indigenous peoples was collected, classified and then represented in various ways back to the West, and then, through the eyes of the West, back to those who have been colonized" (1999:1-2). Australian scholars, Claire Smith, Heather Burke and Graeme Ward (2000:20) concur, charging that aboriginal voices have been stifled by the superior regard given scholarly opinion on aboriginal issues in the West.

A substantial part of this thesis will emphasize the negative consequences for indigenous intellectual traditions, and the societies upon which they are based, of having a hegemonic western view imposed upon them. This thesis is also about the movement, in recent years, of indigenous and western scholars toward greater understanding of each other's positions, as indigenous people move into academia, and western theorists, particularly those proposing non-positivistic models, develop new ways of considering and creating knowledge. The fact that this dissertation has been written indicates my belief in the benefit of, and commitment to, bringing indigenous and western intellectual traditions together. Increasingly, indigenous communities and western scholars are benefitting from cooperative relationships. Scholars are producing more accurate portrayals of indigenous societies which can aid indigenous people in meeting their political, economic and social needs. But, I believe that it must be emphasized, that hegemonic western views in the academic, political and social domains continue to harm indigenous interests.

Making Sense of Ancient Stories Through the Study of Paleoenvironments

Chapter 7 of this thesis is devoted to corroborating oral history with archaeological and paleoenvironmental evidence. No attempt will be made to build a complete picture of the history of the Gitxsan and their relatives, as was previously done in the study undertaken by Susan Marsden (1987). I will only present some of what is said in oral histories regarding the early post-glacial period. I will provide instances in which oral histories describe rapidly rising sea levels, ice-dammed lakes forming in valleys, treeless environments where trees now stand, land masses where none exist now, marine intrusions of river valleys and extinct species. Correlating paleoenvironmental and archaeological evidence will be presented.

When I first heard the *adaa'ox*, most sounded like historical narratives; but others related encounters with "supernatural" beings, and described events which seemed impossible to reconcile to the western worldview. As a product of both worldviews, I sought explanations which made sense in both systems. It was hard to reconcile the stories which seemed so implausible within a body of stories which related what appeared to be ordinary historical events. I have since come to realize that the two perspective cannot always be reconciled because what is “true” in one way of seeing the world in not true to another way of seeing. An example of Gitxsan and western scientific perspectives on the same event can be found in Gottesfeld and Gottesfeld (1987), in which they provide a geological explanation for an event which the Gitxsan attribute to what most westerners would likely call supernatural causes. Yet, as I studied the stories and expanded my understanding of the environmental conditions of the early postglacial period in the study area, I came to see that some of what I had initially thought irreconcilable, was often reconcilable. There are still some stories which I cannot explain from a western perspective, but others became "reasonable" when I came to understand that they were so old that the "fantastic" events being described were ordinary events of a very early time period when the world was not as it is now - the early postglacial period. Many indigenous peoples, including all the peoples of the study area, have a concept of a time long ago when the world was very different. They refer to this as "the distant time," "when Raven walked the earth," or in some other manner that indicates that it was a time somehow distinct from the time in which we now live, not only because it was long ago but because the nature of existence was different then in a rapidly changing world very unlike the relatively stable world which proceeded it. I believe that this "distant time" described in some of these stories is the early postglacial period at the end of the Pleistocene.

When I began to examine the paleoenvironmental literature it came as a great surprise to me to realize how old some of the oral histories are. This required me to extend my belief of what was possible. I came to understand that the Gitxsan and their neighbours remember more than 10,000 years of history. Rather than saying that the Gitxsan have passed down stories of events which occurred 10,000 years ago, I exercise the Gitxsan usage of "remember." The Gitxsan say they remember these ancient events because they believe they were literally there because of reincarnation. Related to the concept of reincarnation is the belief that memories are retained generation to generation. They would also say they remember because time is not considered only lineal, therefore, people can move back in time, usually in *xsiiwok* (dreams or visions).

The elders cannot put dates to ancient stories, which the western half of my mind sought, but they can indicate a very ancient story is from "*Wai la'ooy, la'ooy, wai la'ooy"* (Long years ago, long ago, long, long ago" (Tsimshian Chiefs 1992:15). For knowledgeable culture members this is sufficient because they see their history in terms of chronological rather than absolute dates, although, as previously mentioned, the past, present, and future are seen to intersect, as well.

Even those stories which cannot be explained from a western perspective are, of course, reasonable when examined from the perspective of the cultures in which they were created. Stories which seemed highly implausible from a western perspective may be ordinary events explained from a Gitxsan perspective which seems very foreign, usually "supernatural," to those with western worldviews. An example of this kind of explanation is the mud and debris slide interpreted by the Gitxsan as a supernatural grizzly bear ripping up trees and pushing huge boulders down the mountain (Gottesfeld and Gottesfeld 1987). One's worldview allows him or her to make sense of the world but the explanatory framework of one culture may be difficult for members of another culture to understand because it contradicts their own.

The experience of trying to understand the *adaa'ox* from a western perspective lead me to think about the differences in the way westerners and the Gitxsan see the world. Of course, there is no single version of western worldview or Gitxsan worldview, but, as I will argue throughout this thesis, there are enough similarities within each to be able to contrast them. It is also true that there are many convergences, or communication and understanding would be impossible. It is these differences in ways of perceiving the world and creating knowledge from what is perceived that has become the focus of this dissertation.

Cultural Translation

Translating ideas between cultures based in different worldviews is always a difficult task. When two individuals holding very different worldviews interact, they can never be sure they completely understand each other. Part of what I am attempting to do in this thesis is to act as a cultural translator, hopefully shedding some light on some aspects of indigenous understandings for a largely western audience. In this section I will attempt to illuminate, rather than define, the ways in which I use certain English terms. Later in this thesis I will discuss the use of certain Gitxsan terms.

In this section I will present discussions of how I understand and use the concepts “worldview,” “traditional,” and “indigenous.” A number of scholars have discussed the epistemological differences between western and indigenous worldviews (Cajete 1994; Kawagley 1995; Ortiz 1969; Ryser 1998). They will be addressed in considerable detail in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

The definitions or discussions of worldview presented by two aboriginal scholars are in accord with my understanding and usage. One of these, Yupiaq scholar, Oscar Kawagley, contends: "A worldview consists of the principles we acquire to make sense of the world around us" (1995:7) He goes on to say that each people is defined by its unique worldview (1995:8). The late Tewa anthropologist, Alfonso Ortiz, described worldview in considerable detail. He said,

> The notion "world view" denotes a distinctive vision of reality which not only interprets and orders the places and events in the experience of a people, but lends form, direction, and continuity to life as well. World view provides people with a distinctive set of values, an identity, a feeling of rootedness, of belonging to a time and place, and a felt sense of continuity with a tradition which transcends the experience of a single lifetime, a tradition which may be said to transcend even time (1973:91).

Other terms of importance to this study, over which there is considerable debate, are "traditional" and "indigenous" knowledge (Johnson 1992:4; Berkes 1993:3). In my perspective, "traditional" refers to a practice or belief arising from historical experience and passed on through time. What is traditional, of course, changes over time as new elements of culture are adopted. I believe it is not legitimate for others to judge what is considered traditional by culture members. Trapping as a way of life for the Cree may be only a few hundred years old but they consider it traditional. The silverwork of the Haida may be less than two hundred years old but it has become their tradition. How can it be decided the length of time a practice must be in place before it is considered traditional? That knowledge which is passed on in a culture and which culture members judge to be traditional should be considered so by others, in my opinion.

There are similar difficulties with the term "indigenous knowledge" because "indigenous" has elements of both time and place attached to it, in my perception. For example, the Metis in Canada consider themselves indigenous yet obviously some of their ancestors are not indigenous to North America. The people of African ancestry living in the

Carribean consider themselves indigenous to those islands. For both "traditional" and "indigenous," I believe, community definition and identification is appropriate. In this thesis I will sometimes use both terms interchangeably with both indicating a body of knowledge which has been developed and passed down by people who have lived in a location for some time.

Contents of This Dissertation

Chapter 1, the introduction, has related how my experience as an indigenous person studying and working in academia has shaped what I have written in this dissertation. In this chapter I have discussed the contradictions of being in that position and how those contradictions have resulted in my desire to examine issues around the decolonization of indigenous knowledge. I have chosen the ancient oral histories of the Gitxsan and related peoples of the northern Northwest Coast area to highlight how indigenous knowledge is colonized and how it can be decolonized. A brief discussion was entertained of the nature of the oral histories of the people of the study area. The ethical issues involved in this study were outlined, including the ownership of the oral histories and the historically imperialist character of the discipline of anthropology. This chapter introduces the idea that culture members and western scholars have very different perspectives regarding oral history.

The second chapter of this thesis, the theory chapter, is the most lengthy since theory has become the focus of this work. In this chapter, the differences between indigenous and western ways of knowing and worldviews are outlined. That is followed by an indigenous critique of the claim of some western scientists to the universality and superiority of science to other ways of knowing. Research of indigenous peoples as an act of imperialism is discussed and the alternative - the decolonization of knowledge and the creation of indigenous scholarship. The paradoxes of the indigenous scholar trying to create those alternatives are outlined. The chapter concludes with a discussion of a number of postpositivist approaches to the creation of knowledge and a critique of these.

Chapter 4, the ethnography chapter, briefly discusses the indigenous languages spoken in the study area, and then goes on to describe how the geography has changed over time, with emphasis on the early postglacial geography. This chapter is devoted to describing Gitxsan culture. I do not feel qualified to present ethnographies of the Tsimshian, Nisga'a, Haida, Tlingit, Wet'suwet'en and Tahltan because I do not have enough personal experience with them and knowledge of their culture. I will leave that to others who have greater expertise. However, I will refer to these other cultures, pointing out where they are similar or divergent from the Gitxsan.

Chapter 5 is entitled Indigenous Knowledge, Worldviews and Ways of Knowing. Here, the general tenets of indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing are described.

Gitxsan worldview and ways of knowing are discussed in some detail and a number of others are compared. In a discussion of indigenous methods of knowledge production and transmission, memorization is dealt with at some length since it is key to a dialogue about ancient oral histories. This chapter concludes with a discussion about the role of knowledge in social reproduction.

The sixth chapter is a discourse on the colonization of thought. Ward Churchill's concept of western education as a system of "White Studies" is discussed, as is the appropriation of indigenous knowledge. A critique of western research on epistemological grounds centers around a discussion of a Ronald Mason paper (2000). The chapter ends with a consideration of the concept of "postcolonialism."

Chapter 7 returns to a discussion of the oral histories of the Gitxsan and neighbouring peoples. Aspects of the oral histories as they elucidate environmental events and conditions of the early postglacial period are related. Corroborating paleoenvironmental and archaeological data are provided. The coastal migration hypothesis is considered in light of the existing literature and the oral histories. The chapter concludes with a theoretical discussion of the implications of including oral historical evidence in dialogues regarding the early peopling of the northern Northwest Coast.

The topic of the last chapter concerns the decolonization of indigenous thought. It begins by continuing the discussion of western research on indigenous subjects and then provides an alternative indigenous perspective, including an aboriginal perspective on research ethics. The contradictions involved in being an indigenous researcher are examined followed by a discussion of the indigenous research agenda. The chapter concludes with a dialogue concerning negotiating a space as an indigenous researcher in the academy.

Chapter 2

Theory: Indigenous Worldviews and Western Theories

The Dominance of Western Worldview and Ways of Knowing

Throughout this thesis I will dichotomize indigenous and western ways of thinking and creating knowledge in an effort to clearly emphasize the distinctions. This does not mean I am unaware that there is a great range of perspectives among indigenous and western individuals and schools of thought. As Australian scholars, Claire Smith, Heather Burke and Graeme Ward (2000:23), warn:

> It would be a mistake....for either Indigenous or non-Indigenous peoples to construe their relations in terms of essentialized binaries of Them and Us. It is important to recognize that both Them and Us are complex and multivalent constructs and that individuals are situated in specific historical contexts.

Although indigenous people are often dissatisfied, or even offended, by what has been said about them by western scholars, indigenous communities have, at times, had good relations with academics from which both benefit. It is also true, that indigenous people are increasingly joining the ranks of academia in an attempt to bring the two intellectual traditions into a dialogue. That, of course, is what I endeavor to do in this thesis. At the same time, it must be remembered that western perspectives continue to dominate; continue to shape decision-making in major governmental, economic and social institutions, and continue to harm indigenous interests.

Although anthropologists and scholars in some related disciplines have become more aware in recent decades of the failure of the West to speak for everyone, it is clear from hearing my students, my colleagues and other members of the community in which I live, that many of them are so deeply entrenched in the western worldview that they are not even aware that there are other ways to perceive the world. Foucault calls the concepts utilized in western thinking "rules of practice" and says that those who use them are not necessarily aware of their existence but take them for granted (1972). Although all people are entrenched in their worldviews, indigenous epistemologies allow that others will have different ways of seeing and understanding. In the West, however, a dominant and dominating worldview has arisen, based on positivistic scientific principles. This understanding has become so dominant in the West, that most are unaware that other perspectives are possible.

Philosopher of science and archaeologist, James Bell (1994), has discussed the relationship between science and worldview in the West, how science has become reified, and considered to be monolithic and universal. He claims, "There is little doubt that the reification of scientific views into views of knowledge and scientific method into theories of rationality are major reasons that science influences our lives far beyond its own domain" (Bell 1994:39). Bell contends that science serves as a model for intellectual endeavors in the West (1994:39) but that there are popular misconceptions about science and scientific method (1994:325). The common perception that there is only one version of science and the knowledge it creates - the inductive view "still dominates the English-speaking world" (1994:27), according to Bell. He calls the belief that there is only one conception of science and only one scientific method is called "scientism" (1994:2). Bell contradicts the notion that there is only one version of science, naming four major views in the philosophy of science (1994:vii-viii). These are the inductive, the refutationist, paradigmatic and anarchic perspectives (1994:vii-viii). I will draw upon Bell's model to discuss the dominant and alternative views of science.

The inductive method is an approach to knowledge creation in which observation of data results in the drawing of conclusions or theorizing. Bell contends that since Sir Francis Bacon (often considered the father of modern inductivism), first expounded his view of inductive scientific method, the inductive view of knowledge has dominated western thinking and that it has become so deeply entrenched that it has become ritualistic and ideological (1994:27).

The refutationist perspective, preferred by Bell, claims Karl Popper as its leading proponent. Within this theory of knowledge scientific progress is made by testing hypotheses, refuting faulty ones, with remaining unrefuted ones assumed to be closer to the truth (1959). Popper argued that inductive methods were problematic because empirical generalizations could not actually be proven, but they could be falsified, so eliminating false propositions brings one closer to the truth (1959).

In 1962 Thomas Kuhn presented his paradigmatic view of scientific knowledge creation. In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), Kuhn argued that knowledge is accumulated in a steady, cumulative way but that peaceful periods of knowledge generation, which he called "normal science," are punctuated by scientific revolutions. During periods of normal science, scientists are typically conservative, holding on to established theories, until the number of accumulated anomalies forces a revolution in thinking or paradigm shift to a new way of thinking in science (1962).

The fourth major scientific perspective named by Bell (1994:7) is the anarchic view. The main proponent of this theory of knowledge is Paul Feyerabend. In *Against Method* (1975), he proposed that knowledge can be advanced by posing theories without restraint. As theories are proposed, their potential can be examined and their weaknesses revealed by contending theories (1975).

Although competing theories of scientific knowledge creation exist, it is the inductive view which predominates in western thought. We have been told so often and for so long that there is only one legitimate perspective that most of us have come to believe it. We are told that the West is the creator and keeper of the knowledge created by that perspective. We are told that the way we are taught to see the world is objective reality and that any other contentions are deluded. We are told that time is linear; that past, present and future do not intersect, a view opposed by many indigenous peoples including the Gitxsan. We are told that individuals can own, buy and sell land, an inconceivable idea to those who consider it impossible for a short-lived human to own something which is so much greater than himself and which lasts forever. We are told that all individuals are motivated by self-interest as explicated in Hardin's (1968) "tragedy of the commons" thesis (1968) when, in fact, people can be motivated by other values (Bjorklund 1988; Freeman 1993; Wheeler 1988). These kinds of concepts are so deeply ingrained in western thought that they remain unquestioned by most while for non-westerners they may be transparently untrue. In spite of the existence of other ways of understanding and creating knowledge, both within and outside the West, the inductive science-based view predominates. This dominant western perspective is so powerful that the existence of other ways of knowing is often denied. Other views of scientific methods of creating knowledge and postpositivist perspectives derived from literary criticism, anthropology and other fields have little influence in the education system, among most government policy-makers and the public at large.

Marie Battiste, Mi'kamaq and Sa'ke'j Henderson, Chickasaw, assert that "indigenous knowledge exists and is a legitimate research issue" (2000:xix) but that "Many parts of the existing Eurocentric academy have not fully accepted this principle, arguing that there is no such thing as an indigenous perspective" (2000:xix-xx). Battiste and Henderson delineate how the "singularity of Eurocentric thought" and the "prevailing authority of Eurocentric discourses....has led to the historical and contemporary immunity to understanding and tolerating indigenous knowledge" (2000:xx). Chickasaw scholar, James Youngblood Henderson contends:

> Eurocentric thought does not claim to be a privileged norm. This would be an argument about cultural relativism, which asserts that values are about specific cultural contexts. Instead, Eurocentric thought claims to be universal and general (2000a:63).

In another paper, Henderson claims, "Universality creates cultural and cognitive imperialism, which establishes a dominant group's knowledge, experience, culture, and language as the universal norm" (2000a:63-4).

Although some scholars in recent years have come to be aware of the validity of indigenous forms of knowledge and have been attempting to "give voice" to indigenous people and their understandings, such scholars are not in the majority, even among scholars. The lived reality for indigenous people in their classrooms from kindergarten to graduate school, in their dealings with all types of government agencies, in their portrayal in all kinds of media and in their day to day interactions with non-indigenous people is one in which their understandings are denied, ridiculed and vilified. The objective of this thesis is to make a small contribution toward closing that gap in understanding. In doing so I will emphasize and reemphasize the indigenous perception of the treatment of their bodies of knowledge by the West in both scholarship and popular opinion.

How is it that the West is able to deny the very existence of other ways of knowing, much less admit to their validity? The power of western ideology is such that existence of other ways of thinking can be denied. That, of course, is a sign of successful socialization and education within a politically powerful cultural system. David Penny (2000:48) reinforces my point:

> Teaching employs rhetoric to convince us of the truth of the content taught and the falsehood of alternative ideas. Proper and skillful use of rhetoric, therefore, has the ability to conceal the ideological contingencies of its argument, to masquerade ideology as objectivity.

The deeply ingrained rules for structuring western thinking determine what can be considered real and what can be ruled out as unreal. If a phenomenon cannot be examined, measured, recorded and tested according to the rules of western empiricism, it is often considered not real. While it is difficult for those who are part of the dominant ideology to discern the rules underlying western scientific thinking, the rules are much more apparent to those who are not adherents to those ideologies. These include assumptions about matter, time, nature, values and race. Such assumptions which seem to be self-evident truths to those who are adherents to the ideologies from which they derive may appear as obvious untruths to those holding different ideologies. Aspects of indigenous knowledge cannot be considered in isolation from others and still be understood as culture members understand them. Western scholars are expected to be highly specialized, knowing much about one subject but not necessarily knowing about others which may be related. This is a way of learning about the world through inductive reasoning. In indigenous intellectual traditions, reasoning is usually deductive. It is expected that individuals will understand the functioning of the system and deduce the functioning of the parts, therefrom.

Erica-Irene Daes reminds us that indigenous knowledge systems are integrated wholes functioning on deductive principles which are not easily understood by those who are participants in systems which operate in other ways. She makes the point that not only is the knowledge produced by such systems different from that produced by other systems but that it is different because the philosophies underlying such knowledge production are different, the methods by which such knowledge is produced are different and the language with which it is spoken of contains concepts unfamiliar in other knowledge systems.

Erica-Irene Daes sums up the holistic nature of indigenous knowledge systems,

> ....the heritage of an indigenous people is not merely a collection of objects, stories and ceremonies, but a complete knowledge system with its own concepts, epistemology, philosophy, and scientific and logical validity. The diverse elements of an indigenous people's heritage can only be fully learned or understood by means of the pedagogy traditionally employed by the peoples themselves....Simply recording words or images fails to capture the whole content and meaning of songs, rituals, arts or scientific and medical wisdom. This also underscores the central role of indigenous peoples' own languages, through which each people's heritage has traditionally been recorded and transmitted from generation to generation (quoted in Henderson 2000c:261).

The conviction of many about the correctness of the western worldview and the universality of scientific principles of knowledge creation have lead to a belief that the West had a right to investigate all the world scientifically as well as to conquer it politically. Western versions of the history of the last five hundred years often link science and conquest. Early European voyages to lands previously unknown to them are typically called voyages of exploration rather than voyages of conquest in history texts. The early explorers were primarily interested in trade (or, at times, outright theft) to accrue wealth for European powers and they often carried scientists who studied the geography, flora and fauna (including human fauna) in the newly discovered lands. The western assumption of the entire world as available for scientific investigation goes hand-in-hand with the assumption that the entire world is available for conquest. This attitude is reinforced by evolutionary concepts in which indigenous peoples are considered life forms lower on the evolutionary scale than Europeans and, therefore, as legitimate subjects of inquiry more akin to specimens than to humans. The list of past instances of the treatment of indigenous people as specimens in the name of science is long. Among the most infamous cases is that of Greenlandic Inuk, Minik, who, with his relatives, was brought to New York by Robert Peary to become a museum display (Harper 1986). A recent case involving the objectification of an indigenous person to the level of specimen involves the attempt by a U.S. drug company to patent the DNA of a man from the New Guinea Highlands (Smith 1999:56).

Those of us who are products of two conflicting worldviews, as is the case with most indigenous people in North America and many others of non-European ancestry, are much more likely to be aware of the fact that there is no absolute reality, only our culturally filtered perceptions of it. Postpositivist scholars also have that understanding but their perspective does not dominate western thinking. Political hegemony supports western people in the belief that their worldview is hegemonic too. The reality assumed in much western academic literature, the media and the public consciousness is not the reality of many non-western people who are confronted with it. On a daily basis, indigenous people are presented with "facts" or "truths" which are, to them, clearly unreal, untrue. It can be a frustrating, at times, a disorienting experience which must be coped with. Most instances must be ignored if one is to function in a reality not of their making and not in concordance with their own. Those indigenous people who frequently challenge the dissonance are considered to be "subversive," "radical," "abrasive," or "argumentative." Some of us are more selective in the battles we choose, this dissertation being one of mine.

Along with the deeply entrenched belief in the universality and nearly unquestioned legitimacy of the western worldview, comes great confidence in the methods by which the West creates knowledge. The ideal standard for knowledge creation and verification is the scientific method. Even in non-scientific disciplines, the rigour of the scientific method has been the goal of many in academia. Although postmodernist approaches have arisen in recent years, the ideal of the scientific method in research still dominates (see the discussion of Mason [2000] in chapter 6). Those who do not subscribe to the rules of investigation as set out by western science based on positivistic principles are said “not to have science” (Kidwell and Nabokov 1998:357).

Discussion has been entertained by some western scholars regarding whether indigenous peoples “have science.” Much of this discussion has arisen in the literature on traditional environmental knowledge. If science is defined as the creation of knowledge based on the principles of positivism, rationalism and dualism, then it would be difficult to argue for an indigenous science however, if what we mean by science is; a set of principles which assist in the systematic gathering of knowledge and a body of knowledge which orders human existence, then I would say that indigenous peoples do “have science.” Some of what I call “indigenous knowledge” throughout this thesis could be deemed “science” when this broader definition is used. Professor of anthropology and geology, Charles Schweger, posits that all cultures have science but that each culture has different scientific institutions and practices (pers. com.). Milton Freeman, anthropologist and biologist, concurs, suggesting that indigenous knowledge systems and western science “rest on the same foundation,” which is empirical evidence. Both entail systematic observation and make conclusions based on observation (Freeman 1985:275). Fikret Berkes, too, supports the notion that indigenous knowledge and western science share characteristics in that both create order in human understandings of their environments (1993). Mailhot lists a number of characteristics which indigenous systems of creating knowledge and western science have in common. Both are concerned with pursuing knowledge, are organized bodies of knowledge, utilize empirical data, use observation as an important method, possess specialized concepts and consider nature as a system of relationships (Mailhot 1993:15-16). Although in the writings referred to above, Freeman, Berkes and Mailhot have emphasized the commonalities shared by indigenous knowledge systems and western science they also point out that there are fundamental distinctions between them as well. The fact that these three scholars (and others with similar concerns) must argue to a western audience that indigenous knowledge has validity serves to emphasize my point that indigenous knowledge is generally dismissed in western scholarly and lay circles.

In my opinion, the most dangerous aspect of the belief in the universal applicability of the western worldview is that it conveys a message of superiority over all those who do not hold this view of the world. This ideological hegemony has been translated into social, spiritual and political hegemony which has done devastating damage to indigenous lives. Imperialism became colonialism which over time became more subtle but more powerful and dangerous. If the ideological hegemony of the West was ever to become complete, indigenous people would cease to exist. Fortunately, many indigenous communities are rallying against such an eventuality, resisting absorption by the West, but some have already ceased to exist, some have lost their languages and other aspects of their culture, and others have suffered terrible physical, social, emotional and spiritual consequences from the totalizing efforts of the West.

As part of that resistance to absorption by the West, many indigenous peoples are attesting to the validity of their knowledge systems. In this dissertation I contribute to that discourse by contending that indigenous knowledge systems generate valid knowledge by their own methods which are distinct from those of the West. This knowledge may or may not be validated according to Western scientific standards. Indigenous and western methods of validating knowledge agree at times but conflict at other times. I would argue that indigenous knowledge systems have methods of validating knowledge which can be different from those of the West but are no less valid in that they create knowledge which allows indigenous societies to function successfully. These methods are embedded in a view of reality which is disjunctive with that of the West. I will utilize the example of the oral histories of northwestern North America to illustrate this contention. I believe that the oral histories which I am examining are a particularly good example for the elucidation of ways of knowing which are alternative to western ways precisely because the claims made about their antiquity and accuracy by those who own them seem so implausible to most westerners. These stories are also a good test of how deeply entrenched the western worldview is. The reaction I receive when I declare to westerners that I am studying 12,000 year old oral histories can be decidedly negative and dismissive. Members of the cultures that own these stories, on the other hand, are absolutely convinced of the accuracy and antiquity of their histories because they have well defined methods for maintaining that accuracy.

Although the western worldview and the ways of knowing which arise from it heavily dominate the creation of knowledge in North America, increasing numbers of western scholars (Berkes 1993; Bjorklund 1988; Downer 1997; Freeman 1988a; McGuire 1997; Miller 1998; Waldram 1986) support the contention that indigenous ways of knowing may be different from western ways of knowing but are equally logical and valid. These scholars often maintain that not only is indigenous knowledge useful to members of the cultures which generate the information but that much can be learned by western society from indigenous knowledge generation systems. This learning can take place at two levels. One of these consists of coming to understand other worldviews and ways of knowing which can contribute to a diminishment of the perception of difference and illegitimacy of "the other." The other type of learning which can come from exposure to indigenous knowledge is knowledge of the particular which is not available through western sources. I believe that the oral histories of the northern Northwest Coast peoples are an example of this: These stories confirm western science-generated data about the early post-glacial period in the part of the world in which they take place and can provide additional data which is unavailable from archaeology, geology or other western scientific sources, as will be dicussed in detail in chapter 7.

The oral histories of the peoples of the study area are an example of a large body of knowledge which could and would, for a number of reasons, only be retained within a knowledge system radically different from that of the western world. In literate western cultures there is little need to maintain a long oral historical record of land ownership because it can be recorded in written form. I have heard Gitxsan people say that their *adaa'ox* were something like the white people's land registry office in that the *adaa'ox* record who owns the land but they also record how they came to own it, when they acquired it, their continued ownership over time, the precise boundaries of the territory, the origin of symbols of that ownership (crests), and who the members of the owning group are. It is also inconceivable to most members of literate societies that people have the capacity to memorize thousands of years of history, as the Gitxsan and their neighbours claim, because in a literate society such a need does not arise.

I agree with those scholars, indigenous and non-indigenous alike (Feit 1988:72; Churchill 1995a; Smith 1999), who contend that the debate over the conflicting worldviews of indigenous peoples and the western nations of which they find themselves a part is an undeniably political issue. In a situation of unequal power, westerners make decisions based on their worldview which, in the opinion of colonized indigenous peoples, are adverse to their interests. The principal point of an essay by

Ward Churchill is that the entirety of western education is a system of "White Studies" where indigenous and other worldviews and bodies of knowledge are purposely omitted or treated as peripheral because the objective of the system is indoctrination and subordination of both western and non-western people (1995a).

A large body of literature discussing cultural appropriation and intellectual property rights describes the political nature of knowledge (Messenger 1999; Posey 1996a, 1996b; Swanson 1995). The oral narratives with which this study is concerned clearly have political implications. One example is the dismissal of oral histories as evidence by the Supreme Court of British Columbia in the Delgamuukw land claims case (McEachern 1991). The Gitxsan consider their oral histories to be the primary mechanism by which they confirm territorial ownership. Although the Supreme Court of Canada has said that Justice McEachern was in error, these oral histories have yet to be seriously examined as history in a Canadian court. Such court decisions can adversely affect every aspect of the lives of indigenous peoples by denying them rights to social and political self-determination, lands and resources. Another current example where indigenous knowledge in the form of oral histories has not been taken seriously by western society is in the huge debate over the fate of the Ancient One, the so-called Kennewick Man, according to Phil Minthorn, former Umatilla advisor to the Smithsonian (pers. com.). Armand Minthorn, also of the Umatilla tribe, contends that if the Ancient One is over 9,000 years old,

> that only substantiates our belief that he is Native American. From our oral histories, we know that our people have been part of this land since the beginning of time...We know our history. It is passed on to us though our elders (quoted in Thomas 2000:239).

But the same fact of the ancientness of Kennewick Man is used by Robson Bonnichsen and his colleagues to argue that the remains do not belong to the Umatilla or any other Native Americans because they do not have scientific proof that the remains can be affiliated with any tribe or even Native Americans (Thomas 2000:xxiii).

Foundational to western scholarship is a process of objectification. The scientific observer considers objectivity essential to his or her research if unbiased results are to be obtained. Coupled with this, the western belief that the majority of the objects in the universe are inanimate, results in objectification of much of what is being observed. Even the objects of investigation in anthropology, human beings, are objectified. The subjects of anthropology have been characterized by the discipline as "Others," those who are unlike those observing. For much of its history, anthropology had an explicitly evolutionary perspective in which human societies were ranged from the most primitive to the most civilized. That evolutionary conception has certainly not left the public consciousness and can still be found in anthropological thinking as well. Some anthropologists still claim the right to study the Other, build a career upon their knowledge of the Other, and many feel no obligation to return as much as they have taken away. Others are virtually always poorer and more powerless than those who study them and are often acutely aware that their poverty and powerlessness has been caused by the society of those who come to study them. The evolutionary perspective and the objectifying attitude of western scientists has resulted in the objectification of the Other and this objectification is harmful. Linda Smith states it this way:

> Research has not been neutral in its objectification of the Other. Objectification is a process of dehumanization (1999:39).

Worldview: Our Reality Filter

At the heart of the debate over the value of traditional knowledge systems are the differences in the worldviews held by western and indigenous peoples. My perspective on worldview is that it is a set of principles we use to order our understanding of the world around us. Although there are certainly variations in the worldviews held by indigenous people of different cultures, there is considerable similarity in their fundamental ways of seeing the world. The same holds true for western people. The dominant western worldview is one which is generally ordered by the principles of reductionism, objectivism and positivism with associated dualistic and evolutionary concepts. The indigenous worldview is more often holistic, subjective and experiential. More specifically, the indigenous perception of the universe includes the idea that everything is alive, with spirit, will and intelligence. Associated with this is the idea that all things are related and equal in importance. Susan Lobo and Steve Talbot make this point, contending, "although each tribe or people has its own unique system of spiritual beliefs, there are some commonly held philosophical ideas that are generally shared by

Native American people throughout the Western Hemisphere" (2001:285). Many indigenous scholars confirm this. One of these is Hawaiian scholar, Haunani Kay Trask. She discusses the commonality in indigenous worldviews saying, "indigenous knowledge is not unique to Hawaiians, but is shared by most indigenous peoples throughout the world" (1993a:80). Tewa, Gregory Cajete, similarly contends, "Though American Indian tribes represent diverse expressions of spirituality, there are elemental understandings held in common by all.... derived from a similar understanding and orientation to life" (1994:42). Osage-Cherokee, Rennard Strickland, contends that, "cosmologies differed from tribe to tribe, but basic beliefs were constant" (1997:92). Leroy Little Bear, a Blood scholar, makes a clear statement regarding the similarities in worldview among indigenous peoples, saying, "there is enough similarity among North American philosophies to apply the concept generally" (2000:77). Likewise, the worldview of all people of European cultural descent is not identical but the similarities are great enough that it is possible to speak of western and indigenous worldviews as distinct entities (Ryser 1998).

The fundamental distinctions between indigenous and western worldviews result in contradictory perceptions of reality. The predominant western view of the functioning of the universe is one of a material world of chemical and mechanical processes which was formed in its current state as a matter of physical and evolutionary principles, and which can be understood as a matter of natural laws. Indigenous people, on the other hand, see an animate universe alive with purpose, meaning and will. As Yupiaq scholar, Oscar Kawagley expresses it (1995:1), "The Western educational system has made an attempt to instill a mechanistic and linear worldview in indigenous cultural contexts previously guided by a typically cyclical worldview." The cyclical worldview Kawagley speaks of is one in which past, present and future interact; matter and energy are seen as freely interchangeable; and all aspects of the universe are considered animate and equally valuable. Hierarchy and linearity are less dominant in indigenous thought than in western thought. Throughout much of human history, by most human cultures, the universe was probably seen as living and meaningful but through historical processes, the linear and mechanistic view has come to dominate. The cyclical indigenous worldviews spoken of here do survive, though, in spite of considerable pressure to abandon them.

Fundamental concepts are so deeply imbedded in language and philosophy that they are usually taken for granted as reality. Unless one has considerable exposure to alternative ways of thinking there is no reason to suspect that there are other ways of perceiving reality. Where political hegemony exists, as in the case of the West, there is little reason to give up one's perception of reality even if exposed to another. Linda Smith discusses a specific example of perceptions which differ between the West and the Maori, namely space and time. In the Maori conception, space and time are not considered discrete and distinct words do not exist for the two conceptions (1999:50).

For the Gitxsan, time, matter and space are not seen as immutable, it is possible to move back and forth through time, to move through planes of existence and to change form. When I asked an expert speaker of Gitxsanimx for Gitxsan words meaning "space" and "time," he found it very difficult to answer, giving me a list of ways in which these concepts could be referred to in specific instances, rather than as abstract concepts. Shifts of space and time are considered possible in many indigenous societies through shamanic journeys, shape-shifting, visions of the past or future, communication with the dead, and so on.

Indigenous Epistemologies

In recent years a number of indigenous scholars have begun to elucidate the epistomologies of their cultures in considerable detail in literature designed for western audiences. One such example is the work of Oscar Kawagley (1995:1-2) in which he discusses the Yupiaq worldview which he contends is epitomized by the word *ella* (1995:15). Variations of this word can refer to weather, awareness, world, creative force, god, universe, sky or consciousness (Kawagley 1995:15). It is through their *ella* that human beings are able to maintain their existence in the world interrelating with other humans, animals and other beings of the natural world and the spiritual world (Kawagley 1995:15-16). Another discussion of indigenous worldview is presented by Cowlitz philosopher, Rudolph Ryser, who contend that indigenous and western worldviews are distinct. He calls the mode of thought of the indigenous peoples of the

Western Hemisphere Cuarto Spiralism and describes it as emphasizing the interconnectedness of all entities past, present and future (1998:21). The dominant mode of thought of the western world, Ryser calls Progressivism (1998:25). In this worldview, life is considered to have evolved to greater complexity until humans, especially European humans, became the pinnacle of evolution and came to have dominion over the earth (1998:26). Probably the most widely read indigenous elucidation of worldview has been that of Tewa anthropologist, Alfonso Ortiz (1969). Ortiz presents the complexity of the Tewa cosmology in which harmony between the physical and spiritual worlds is maintained by overriding the division during important life cycle events (Ortiz 1969:137), by considering each human group to have a spiritual counterpart (1969:121) and by organizing their society into social/religious groups which each have a part to play in maintaining balance in the universe (1969:127).

When worldviews are as divergent as those of the indigenous and western worlds it can be difficult for members of two such dissimilar societies to understand or even to recognize the existence of the other's worldview. This lack of understanding and recognition may have been equally true for both indigenous and western peoples when they first made contact. The reality today, though, after colonization of much of the indigenous world by the West, is that there is a disparity in that lack of understanding. Colonization involves attempts at acculturation which are more or less successful. As part of this process, especially where the acculturative process has been more successful, indigenous people have often come to understand much about their western colonizers, including their worldview. It is a common complaint voiced by native elders that their young people have been indoctrinated into western culture to the neglect of their own. The colonizers, on the other hand, in their firm belief in the superiority of their worldview and culture, have usually made little effort to understand indigenous worldview. Holders of the worldview based on western scientific rationality are often so certain that their view of reality is universally applicable that it, thereby, becomes difficult for them to conceive of the existence of other ways of seeing the world, much less have any interest in understanding them. According to Linda Smith, western scholars usually assume that "Western ideas about the most fundamental things are the only ideas possible to hold, certainly the only rational ideas, and the only ideas which can make sense of the world" (1999:56).

Although it may be more obvious to non-westerners that the western worldview and associated ways of knowing are not the only valid way of seeing the world, there are western thinkers who come to this conclusion, as well. One of these is philosopher of science, David Hess. Hess argues that scientific disciplines and communities are transnational today which leads him to the conclusion that national cultural differences are less important than the commonalities of science (Hess 1995:117). He contends that the West has tended to see science as "supracultural and therefore somehow outside society and culture" rather than as socially constructed (1995:117). In the

West, faith in this belief is such that Hess uses the term "technototemism" to refer to unquestioned assumptions related to convictions said to be scientific (1995:23). Hess contends that failure to investigate the social construction of science results in "buying into the ideology of science as a supranational phenomenon that is everywhere the same" (1995:39).

When attempts are made to break down these barriers to understanding, communication difficulties can be formidable. The greatest barrier to communication of indigenous ways of thinking to western peoples has been, and probably remains, the lack of interest and outright hostility on the part of many westerners to the challenge other ways of thinking pose to their worldview. But even for those westerners interested in understanding indigenous ways of thinking, the barriers to communication and comprehension are great. Because of fundamentally different ways of perceiving the universe those from such decidedly different cultures find it hard to find a common vocabulary with which to communicate. Even if they speak a common language as is often the case in North America, that does not mean they will be able to find a common understanding. The concepts employed by each are so fundamentally different that the words said by one may not be understood by the other, especially on the part of the westerner trying to understand the indigenous individual. A westerner listening to an indigenous person may not understand why the dead are alive, people can transform into animals, people can talk to trees, shamans can move through space and time, *et* *cetera*. All of these things make perfect sense in a universe which is entirely animate and where space, time and matter are not immutable. For the indigenous person it is equally illogical to think that animals do not take revenge on those who abuse them, and that people will kill as many animals as they can unless the government regulates hunting. These entirely incongruous statements are products of two distinct worldviews - indigenous and western.

These kinds of divergences result in communication between western and indigenous people which often involves non-concepts. Very often, westerners are not aware that some of the words commonly used to discuss aboriginal cultures are non-concepts to the people under discussion. At times, indigenous people find themselves forced to use these non-concepts to be able to communicate - even with each other. When indigenous people attempt to explain why these non-concepts do not make sense in their language and way of thinking, it is very difficult to articulate in a European language which does not have the appropriate words to explain such indigenous concepts. I will provide a few examples.

Many academic discussions of indigenous cultures discuss the supernatural. "Supernatural" is a concept which is not held by many indigenous peoples. Instead, every aspect of the universe is considered to be part of the natural world. Some entities have greater, and others, lesser power. Those with greater power may be equated with the western concept of the supernatural but it is not a very accurate conceptualization and the term essentially denies the power which is inherent in the less powerful.

Another example of a non-concept used in communication regarding things indigenous can commonly be found in western literature on ethnobotany or traditional environmental knowledge. In these bodies of literature discussions are often entertained of the "luck" which indigenous people acquire from plants and other sources for hunting and other important undertakings. In most indigenous ways of thinking, luck does not exist. "Power" is often a more appropriate English word. Luck implies the fortuitous where to the indigenous way of thinking, power is earned. Related to this is the western concept of "accident." Many indigenous peoples believe that there is no luck and there are no accidents. What occurs in an individual's life is a result of how he or she has lived life. This worldview involves the idea that one must always be very aware of everything said, done, and even thought. Words, thoughts and actions have the power to benefit or harm, the power to make things happen. When something undesirable occurs it may be as the direct and immediate result of some kind of thoughtless or malicious intent on the part of the one who suffers or it may be because that person has not been diligent enough over a long period of time in building inner strength, therefore leaving him or herself open to the malicious intent of others.

Wolfe *et al.* discuss other aspects of the western-indigenous communication problem.

They contend that it is difficult for indigenous peoples who rely on the oral transmission of knowledge to communicate their knowledge by means of the western system based on literacy, numeracy, summarizing and categorization (1992:17-18). They say, "Because orally-based indigenous knowledge systems are designed to incorporate complexity, expand detail, and incorporate rather than eliminate the unexplained and unexplainable, they do not reduce information into condensing or summarizing categories: rather they seek inclusive groupings with complex internal differentiation" (Wolfe *et al.* 1992:18). An example given by Wolfe and her colleagues is from a Joseph Epes Brown paper (Brown 1973) in which Brown presents a Lakota example of classification which differs greatly from the Linnean system. In this example the Lakota group spiders, elk, bison, birds, flying insects and cottonwood trees into a category based on wind or breath. They are all considered by the Lakota to have similar relationships to the wind in that as the wind moves, it exerts unifying force over these living beings (Brown 1973:59). It is easy to imagine a situation in which an individual immersed in the Linnean system and unversed in the Lakota knowledge system would by mystified by such a grouping of apparently disparate elements until it was explained by Lakota principles. The same might hold true for a traditional Lakota person who was not familiar with the evolutionary principles upon which the Linnean system is based.

Western Writers' Approaches to the *Adaa'ox*

The peoples of the northern Northwest Coast and western scholars usually perceive the *adaa'ox* very differently. A major factor contributing to that difference is the divergences between western and indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing. I do not believe many indigenous people would present a strictly essentialist argument that only culture members could or should study or write about aspects of indigenous culture but it is evident to me that those who are most familiar with a subject are likely to know it best. To culture members, the stories are theirs, they have the cultural knowledge surrounding the stories, and, therefore, they are best able to understand them. Just as a professor of Canadian history is likely to have a greater understanding of Canadian history than an undergraduate student, an elder is likely to know more about the oral history of his or her culture than is someone new to the subject (even if that individual has a Ph.D. in anthropology). Yet, western scholars have often contended, both implicitly and explicitly, that they are better able to understand the oral histories than are culture members (Cove and MacDonald 1987; MacDonald and Cove 1987; Levi-Strausss 1963,1979, 1983, 1978a, 1987b; Maud 1993). To offer an interpretation of the stories as metaphors, as indicators of universal functions of the human mind, or as creative imaginings when culture members say they are something else, is to contend that the western scientist's interpretation is superior.

One reason the western scientist can believe his interpretation is superior to that of culture members is the western scientific conviction in the value of objectivity. The western outsider can judge his evaluation of the stories superior because the scientific view, of which objectivity is a central tenet, is considered to be a superior way to evaluate any fact. Conversely, I would contend that this is extremely doubtful because of the speciousness of the possibility of objectivity. I believe, and other indigenous thinkers would likely agree that, since everything in the universe is constantly interacting, including the human observer, objectivity is a logical impossibility. Instead, judgments about the soundness of information are made based on personal knowledge and information judged to be from reliable sources. The indigenous person would likely maintain that since all knowledge is subjective, the individual with the greatest experience of the subject is likely to have the best understanding of it, especially if that individual meets the culturally specified criteria of a knowledgeable person. Such criteria vary among cultures but for the Gitxsan, for example, a knowledgeable person would be considered one with a broad base of knowledge. He or she would be one who understood the Gitxsan perspective of how the cosmos functions; how human society functions; the laws and moral principles of human behaviour; appropriate relationships between humans, other animals and other beings; knowledge of the land (of geography and resources); of sources of spiritual power; of the history of the people; of important properties such as crests, songs and dances; of the language; and of neighbouring peoples. A knowledgeable person would be expected to know much about all of these things and would often be particularly expert in a specific area. Non-indigenous scholars can, and sometimes, do take this approach to the study of culture.

In addition to taking a more holistic approach to indigenous cultures, it is my position that any culture study should be recognizable to members of the culture under investigation. Those studies which present cultures in ways that members do not recognize and in which it is contended or implied that those unrecognizable studies are more true or accurate than the ways in which culture members understand their cultures, contribute to the project of colonization. They do so by proclaiming the West's understanding of the colonized to be greater than their understanding of themselves. Approaches to the study of oral history or other aspects of culture which present culture members' understandings serve both those whose cultures are being portrayed and the scholars undertaking the studies. Studies which present indigenous understandings confirm indigenous identity and dignity, at the same time, contributing to scholarship by presenting accurate information upon which tenable relationships between indigenous and western people can be built. Ultimately, I see the future of scholarship on indigenous subjects, as being undertaken by indigenous scholars and by non-indigenous scholars, primarily at the request of and under the direction of indigenous communities. Such work generated by the indigenous research agenda will build a body of scholarship which furthers indigenous and scholarly objectives.

In light of the discussion of indigenous understandings of culture, what is the nature of the *adaa'ox* from the perspective of those whose stories they are? From the indigenous perspective, the *adaa'ox* are the histories of each kinship unit which the Gitxsan and most of their neighbours call a house. Complete versions of the *adaa'ox* were said (Mathews 1988:4524) to take up to four months to tell. It took an entire winter season to relate these full renditions of *adaa'ox*. These comprehensive accounts included the entire *gan didils* (way of life, culture) and *yagumxtxw* (wisdom, philosophy, worldview) of the people. Abbreviated versions of *adaa'ox* are told to children, anthropologists, and others thought to be lacking the necessary cultural background to be able to understand the complex versions. The short versions of *adaa'ox* leave out enormous amounts of information. When a number of versions of an *adaa'ox* are examined by non-culture members they might be considered contradictory but they very often represent different parts of the same lengthy story with particular details included in one version which are excluded from another. Each teller chooses to select what he or she sees as important for a specific telling. What the teller sees as important at a particular time may be influenced by many factors such as his or her personal interests; the point that needs to made (*e.g.*, to solve a land dispute or make a moral statement); the needs, desires or abilities of the audience; or to answer a particular inquiry such as the kinds of questions I have asked elders during research. Western scholars have not always apprehended the *ada'ox* as I have come to understand them.

For over one hundred years western scholars have been studying the oral histories of the peoples of the northern Northwest Coast. Many western commentators on the *adaa'ox* have believed that, not only do they have the authority to give an opinion on the histories, but that they have the expertise to be correct - correct even over and above the views of culture members. This has been true of many anthropological writers from Boas to Levi-Strausss. Serious doubts about the anthropologist's ability to accurately represent cultures not his own have only been expressed recently in anthropological circles by the postmodernists, which I believe is a healthy attitude that will ultimately result in greater understanding.

A few generalizations will suffice here before I discuss each commentator on oral history separately. In the early years of Northwest Coast anthropology, the historical particularists believed the oral histories had at least some historical validity and could be utilized to reveal the origins, migrations, development of society, and particular historical events of Northwest Coast societies. This was evident in the works of Barbeau (n.d.a, n.d.b, n.d.c, n.d.d, 1929, 1945, 1950a, 1950b) and was explicit in de Laguna (1960). However, as western scientists, the historical particularists retained the right to make the distinction between history and myth.

As anthropological work became more theoretically oriented, the work of researchers like George MacDonald and John Cove, became less based on the particulars of the oral histories and more firmly based on anthropological theories solidly grounded in the western positivist tradition. Cove and MacDonald's writings of the 1980s deny the indigenous view of the stories and some related aspects of their cultures, and instead, present the anthropologist's view as more authoritative. A very judgmental view of the oral histories which vehemently denies any validity to the indigenous view of their own stories comes from a professor of English, Ralph Maud (1993). His discussion of Gitxsan oral histories will be presented in considerable detail later in this chapter.

In recent years, more and more anthropologists are working on behalf of or in very close collaboration with aboriginal peoples. When indigenous people set the agenda of the research, the works which result likely come closer to expressing their views on oral history. Catherine McClellan (1987) and Julie Cruikshank (1991), have both worked with the Council of Yukon Indians to produce works which include the perspective on oral history held by the people for whom the work was produced. Aboriginal groups (Tsimshian Chiefs 1992; McKay, *et al* 1982; School District 92: 1996) have begun publishing documents which present their views of oral history. Although such works will undoubtably represent most accurately the indigenous view, even with these documents questions can be raised. Primary among these questions might be how accurately a written document can represent what had previously been presented in oral form. Regardless of such questions, there can be no doubt that these documents most accurately represent the voice of those whose stories are being told since they are telling their own stories.

Although the body of oral history literature written by or on behalf of aboriginal peoples is growing, most of what is available has been written by westerners. These have primarily been anthropologists and linguists. In the early years of the recording of these stories the discipline of anthropology was in the process of formation so some of the early ethnographers were actually from other professions. I will now present some of what particular western scholars have said about northern Northwest Coast oral histories, especially their comments on the historical validity of the narratives.

Franz Boas seems a logical starting point for this discussion as the "father of North America anthropology" and the author of a large volume of Tsimshian oral narratives (1916). Although, in this volume, Boas consistently referred to Tsimshian stories as myths, and did not distinguish between *adaa'ox* and *andamatlasxw*, he did seem to accept that some of the stories had historical validity. Boas relates the origins of various Tsimshian houses and clans from the *adaa'ox* which seems to indicate his acceptance of the stories as historical, although he credits the stories with a very shallow time depth. For example, he describes the migration of the Eagles from Tlingit to Tsimshian territory as occurring "about 1740" (1916:486), and the migration of the Wolves as "at a late date" when, according to the people whose ancestors were involved and, according to my research, these events took place at a much earlier date.

I will digress slightly here to discuss why Boas and other early anthropologists were uncertain regarding the dating of the oral histories. This is not surprising for a number of reasons. For one, their work took place before the advent of radiocarbon dating or other methods of chronometric dating at a time when there was considerable debate in scholarly circles regarding the timing of the initial peopling of North America. This debate focused on both the timing of the original inhabitants' arrival and the routes by which they migrated. The west coast of North America was an important area of investigation in this debate.

Westerners examining the *adaa'ox* might also be deceived by the rich detail found therein. The detailed descriptions of events complete with names of people and places, descriptions of social structure, political systems, spiritual beliefs, motivations and dialogue could leave the impression that old stories were more recent. Another factor which might be deceptive to the western reader or listener is the way the peoples of the area refer to their ancestors as "grandfather" or "grandmother" no matter how many generations back the ancestor they are referring to lived. Of course, the primary reason why westerners are likely to underestimate the antiquity of the *adaa'ox* is that it is difficult for those without such a tradition to believe that people can remember events which occurred thousands of years ago.

The preceding remarks on Boas' work on Tsimshian oral narratives derive from my reading of the text itself, but Ralph Maud provides some very illuminating commentary on Boas' methodology. Although I have serious concerns about Maud's perspective on the oral narratives of Tsimshian-speaking peoples (which will be addressed in detail later in this section), his criticism of Boas' research methods and ethics is relevant to this thesis. Maud contends that Boas treated Henry Tate (who sent him most of the narratives included in *Tsimshian Mythology)* as a cipher rather than an informant (2000:9). The significance of this statement lies in Maud's assertion that, far from being the accurate translation of stories provided by knowledgeable Tsimshian informants, the text has been interpreted by Tate and reinterpreted again by Boas before being presented to the reader. Maud even provides convincing and somewhat disturbing evidence that the texts were originally written by Tate in English and later translated back into Tsimshian which makes the likelihood of accuracy even more remote. Although I believe the information about Boas' methods presented by Maud provided valuable insight into Boas' work, that does not mean that I can credit Maud for any constructive insights into the oral histories themselves. Maud clearly does not understand the nature of the stories of which he speaks since he repeatedly criticizes, not just Boas' and Tate's work, but all oral tradition, as "plagiarism" (2000:55,57,66) which is a non-concept from the perspective of those seeking to have their oral histories transmitted accurately through time.

The work of Marius Barbeau (n.d.a, n.d.b, n.d.c, n.d.d, 1929, 1945, 1950a, 1950b, 1953, 1958, 1961, 1973, 1990) has been the most significant for my research for several reasons. Barbeau's is the largest collection of the oral histories of the Tsimshian-speaking peoples and many of those were collected from Gitxsan. His are also the best documented, often providing identifying information about the teller such as English name, Gitxsan name, house, clan, village and other important information. Barbeau's collections of oral narratives do not combine *adaa'ox* with *andamatlasxw* which indicates a significant understanding of the oral narratives of the Gitxsan and related peoples. Barbeau may have been more astute than other western scholars about the nature of the oral narratives because of his long and close relationship with his Nisga'a colleague, Wolf Clan chief, William Beynon. It could even be argued that Barbeau's work on the Tsimshian-speaking peoples was as much Beynon's as it was his own. Beynon worked with Barbeau from the time of his first field trip to Tsimshian communities in 1914, during his subsequent field trips in 1921-22, 1924, 1926, 1927, 1929 and 1939. In addition, Beynon recorded data on Tsimshian societies and sent the notebooks to Barbeau from 1929 until 1956 (Anderson and Halpin 2000:5-7).

Although the primary collector of much of Barbeau's data, Beynon has only recently been recognized as an ethnographer in his own right (Nowry 1995:214) . Barbeau recognized Beynon's value primarily as an interpreter (Anderson and Halpin 2000:7) which seems to me is a considerable devaluation of his contribution. I sympathize with his position, having been called "an educated clerk" by a well-known anthropologist for my work on the Delgamuukw case. Beynon worked not only for Barbeau, but also for other anthropologists, including Franz Boas, Viola Garfield and Philip Drucker. Garfield and Drucker considered Beynon to be an informant in his own right rather than just an interpreter (Anderson and Halpin 2000:8-10).

Barbeau and Boas were contemporaries who shared a theoretical perspective - historical particularism. Barbeau collected voluminous data on the Tsimshian-speaking peoples. Whether he collected the data himself or through William Beynon, Barbeau recorded detailed information about many aspects of Tsimshian culture, particularly oral histories and the related data on crests and hereditary names. His approach to the study of culture was a broad one which is not displeasing to Tsimshian peoples looking back at the research in later years. Barbeau and Beynon's work, especially their field notes, has been utilized extensively by the Gitxsan and Tsimshian in recent years in a variety of projects.

Barbeau, in his published and unpublished writings concerning the oral histories of the Tsimshian-speaking peoples, clearly accepted the historicity of the stories, but, like Boas, he believed the history to be very short. He wrote, "With the exception of a few myths mostly on the beginnings, the majority of the narratives relate episodes belonging to the last two or three centuries" (Barbeau n.d.d:1). He goes on to say that people have arrived "on our continent during the past millennium." Barbeau believed (n.d.c:5) that the arrival of the Northwest Coast peoples and the development of the social system was so recent that they adopted the eagle as a clan crest "in imitation of the Russian imperial crest." Like Boas, Barbeau lived and worked prior to the advent of radiocarbon dating. In spite of the inaccuracy of his dating and some other aspects of his commentary, Barbeau has provided an extremely valuable record of the oral histories of the Tsimshian-speaking peoples in his field notes and his books on totem poles (1929) and crests (1950a, 1950b) particularly.

Viola Garfield, according to Jay Miller's biography, came to her interest in ethnography through her direct experience with the Tsimshian rather than as a student of Boas, as with so many of her contemporaries, although she did train later with the father of North American anthropology (1989:109). Like Boas and Barbeau, Garfield was greatly assisted in her Tsimshian research by William Beynon (Miller 1989:111). Garfield's most widely read works are probably those on the Tsimshian and the Tlingit. It is her work on the Tlingit that I am concerned with here since it is in that work that she discusses oral history.

Garfield gathered a number of Tlingit narratives (1961, 1951). Her perspective on these stories can be illustrated by the following quotes: "Totem poles....have illustrated their legendary and actual history" (1961:1) and "Each lineage also has a history which explains its remote origin and its development, though this history may be largely legendary" (1961:6). In another work (1951:52) Garfield says Tsimshian oral narratives "reflect not only actual occurrences but also social ideals, customs, and beliefs concerning the former and present world." Garfield's statements reflect her belief that the narratives contained both history and legend as well as ideology and other cultural information.

Frederica de Laguna was a student of Boas' at Columbia University and she later counted him as one of her three major influences along with Alfred Kroeber and Irving Hallowell (McClellan 1989:42). Her training consisted of work in the areas of archaeology, cultural anthropology, folklore and museology (McClellan 1989:38-39) which probably influenced her later research which took a encyclopedic perspective, especially her work on the Angoon and Yakutat Tlingit. In these studies she incorporated archaeology, ethnography and oral history - an approach which I consider valuable since different sources of knowledge can enhance, substantiate and correct each other. According to McClellan, the Yakutat Tlingit also appreciated de Laguna's work. In 1986 they honoured her at a potlatch (McClellan 1989:40). I regard this important because I believe that when a community respects work focusing upon them, that is probably a good indication that the work is reliable. I also appreciate the fact that de Laguna defines the anthropologist's task as recording the culture member's point of view as accurately as possible (de Laguna 1957:179).

De Laguna (1960:16-22, 1972:210-211) provides explanations of the Tlingit's perspective on their narratives in a number of monographs. In one (1960), she discusses the oral narratives of the people of Angoon. Although de Laguna indicates some doubt about the historicity of the Tlingit narratives she does distinguish between mythical stories, like the Raven stories, and "sib traditions" which describe origins, migrations, wars and other major events. She also suggests (1960:21) that there may be an intermediary group which she calls "legendary-but-maybe-historical." She is confident enough regarding the historical nature of the Angoon people's stories to state (1960:22) "the archaeologist cannot afford to neglect any clue suggested by these stories and myths."

In her work on Yakutat (1972:210-211), de Laguna provides a detailed description of the Tlingit perspective of their narratives. She says that the Tlingit make a distinction between myth and history. This distinction seems to accord with the Gitxsan conceptions of *andamatlasxw* and *adaa'ox*. De Laguna expresses (1972:211) an understanding of the fact that there is no one Tlingit or even Yakutat history but that the history of moieties and sibs taken together makes up the history of the village or the people.

Catharine McClellan was a student of de Laguna and like her mentor she has been concerned with a holistic approach to anthropological research, including archaeological, ethnographic and oral historical materials in her work. Stoler contends that McClellan's work is characterized by a focus on fieldwork combined with a "Boasian core" (1989:247). By this, Stoler means that McClellan is committed to recording and reconstructing the cultures of the Yukon peoples she has studied, preserving all ethnographic details because of their scientific value (1989:247). Although Stoler notes McClellan's concern with ethics she does not conclude, as I do, that McClellan's attention to ethnographic detail is an ethical issue. Probably the greatest concern of indigenous people regarding anthropological research in their communities is that the documents produced are accurate. McClellan's concern with meticulous detail and corroborating evidence would likely result in more accurate information. Stoler also notes that McClellan has "a decided caution toward theoretical models" preferring to allow the facts to speak for themselves (1989:248). This, too, I see as a virtue in McClellan's work. The presuppositions of researchers strongly committed to particular models can be the enemy of truth, but it is also true, that unarticulated presuppositions can obscure the reasons why particular conclusions were reached, as well.

McClellan's position regarding oral history is like that of Garfield and de Laguna in that she sees the stories as containing both fact and fiction. McClellan (1975:67) says that the peoples of the southern Yukon relate two kinds of stories. "Old time stories" she claims can be called myths. These usually occur in the past, often when people were indistinguishable from animals. "True histories" relate events experienced by people who are still alive or who died in the recent past, McClellan contends. She says the true histories are closer to the western conception of history but that the distinction between the two kinds of stories is not always easy to make. She also claims that the groups which have Tlingit-like sib organization have another category of story which she calls sib traditions. Although McClellan seems to accept the "true histories" as historical, she does not make this interpretation explicit. In a more recent work, McClellan refers to sib traditions saying that the Yukon people view the stories as history (1987:180).

George MacDonald's work of the 1980s presents a perspective which moves away from accepting any historical validity in the narratives. He presents his view of Haida oral history in a work concerned with totem poles and crests (1983:36). He discusses Haida totem poles as works of art representing animals, supernatural beings, natural phenomena and celestial bodies. In at least two works (1983, 1989) he does not present the Haida perspective of these stories associated with the crest as histories. MacDonald's perspective of the poles and crests as art may reflect his experience as a museum curator. A shift has occurred in museology away from the Boasian attempts to represent aboriginal material culture in some kind of context toward representing objects of aboriginal culture as decontextualized art (Penney 2000:52).

The lack of understanding of the historical nature of Haida narratives indicated in MacDonald's works results in what I believe are erroneous conclusions. For example, he contends each moiety should have crests which are distinct, but, in fact, there was transfer of crests between moieties (1983:36). That is true according to the system in which crests are acquired. Crests are acquired through involvement in some kind of momentous event. Thereafter, the crest belongs to the kinship unit involved in the event. If, over time, the kinship unit subdivides, the crest can come to belong to more than one kin group. In the case of a very old crest, many kin groups spread across many nations and their descendants in those nations may come to own the right to use the crest. These rules of crest ownership would make it unlikely that members of different moieties would own the same crest but MacDonald may be interpreting as the same crest what the Haida would see as different crests. What appears to be the same crest used by both moieties, a wolf or an eagle, for example, may, in fact, have different names and represent entirely distinct historical events. A wolf figure on a pole may be a white wolf, the Prince of Wolves, migrating wolf or a number of other crests with unique histories, all represented by a wolf figure which may seem to be the same design to those unaware of the system and the particulars of each crest. A wolf crest indicates that a wolf was involved in the historical event in some way but different wolves, different histories and different families are being represented. The name and story of each crest must be known to determine which crest it is unless the crest has some features which are absolutely unique to it.

MacDonald also claimed (1983:36) that the limited number of Haida crests indicates that a large amount of wealth was needed to buy or honour a new crest. He seems to be implying that crests can be bought or created merely because one has the wealth. That is not my understanding of how crests are acquired among the northern Northwest Coast peoples. If crests represent historical events, they cannot be created at will but are created when a member or members of a kin group are involved in a significant historical event. When a kin group has an experience of historical importance the members decide among themselves that a certain symbol of that event will be taken as a crest. The family then holds a potlatch at which the significant event is announced and the crest presented. Thereafter, the family can display the crest and must continue to recount its origin at potlatches where the witnesses validate (or correct or deny) the ownership of the crest and the associated history and territory. A family can inherit the right to display a crest in this way, they cannot buy it. The only exception to the rule of inheritance of crests, of which I have heard, is when they are given in compensation for a serious offense or as gifts to seal a momentous agreement. These crests are seen as a temporary gift from the giver to the receiver, a right which cannot be inherited since one cannot give away history (M. Johnson, pers. com.).

If crests "moved," as MacDonald puts it, from the north coast to the south coast, the logic of the system indicates that people with the inherited right to use certain crests moved, bringing their crests with them. This has occurred throughout the history of the

Northwest Coast when women married outside their village or nation; or when people were displaced by war, famine or disagreement within their village or kin group. That is why kin groups within different nations throughout the area can identify each other as related. If they meet someone with the same crest, each can relate their oral history to trace the relationship, which is usually one of kinship. Such a recitation will often reveal common ancestors, the split of the kin group and the migrations to their present villages.

MacDonald's assumptions about the buying of crests has not been an uncommon one among anthropologists. Northwest Coast societies have been interpreted by anthropologists through their western perspectives in which economy is the driving force in life. The result has often been an over-emphasis on class, privilege, and wealth. Northern Northwest Coast societies were not class societies; they were societies in which individuals were ranked within kin groups and kin groups were roughly ranked. Every kin group had its own chiefs, territories, resources, crests, histories and wealth. Some were wealthier than others but that did not necessarily give them authority over other kin groups. As I understand it, in most northern Northwest Coast societies, certainly for the Gitxsan, each kin group was an independent economic and political unit which had its own land and resources but which traded, interacted and intermarried with other kinship units both within the nation and without. Village chiefs were generally only figureheads with no real authority over anyone other than their own families. The Gitxsan make it clear that the position of village chiefs was largely ceremonial and extended only to welcoming visitors. Even power within each family or house was diffused with a number of chiefs in each kin group and all adult family members having some authority. Western observers have sometimes not understood that the highest ranked and lowest ranked persons in Northwest Coast societies lived under the same roof - were uncle and nephew who cared for and about each other.

Chiefly privilege has frequently been dicussed in the anthropological literature with regard to Northwest Coast societies and has sometimes not been well understood. Succession in Northwest Coast societies is not strictly inherited. Those who inherit a chief's position may have to be a member of the kin group which owns the chief's name but any one of a number of possible candidates can inherit the position. They must earn the position, primarily through hard work, generosity and wisdom. In return the chief receives only prestige. A chief is expected to be committed to the welfare of his family members and to expend considerable effort to protect their interests. Esteem, in these societies, comes from distributing wealth, not possessing or consuming it. Chiefs are "feeding the people all of the time" (both literally and figuratively) as the Gitxsan say. The apparent "privilege" of the chiefs is largely symbolic. Chiefs may be able to wear certain ceremonial clothing (which belongs to their title, not the individual), to display wealth goods (which belong to the entire kin group) and make public speeches, but they do this on behalf of their families as caretakers of the house-owned property. This is made clear in most potlatches where chiefs often preface remarks by saying that they are speaking on behalf of themselves and their kin group. The chiefs' real concern is looking after their family members, not gaining power and prestige for themselves as it has been represented in some anthropological works by MacDonald (1989:16) and others (Garfield and Forrest 1961:6; Adams 1973:35-38).

The apparent wealth of chiefs is not, in fact, theirs, as is implied in MacDonald's assertion regarding chiefs buying crests. The chiefs are considered only to be the caretakers of their titles, crests, wealth goods, lands and other properties. All of these things are eternal while the caretaker is not. For a chief to consider himself the owner of such property would be considered extremely arrogant, even difficult to conceive of because the individual is only on this earth for a short time while the crests, histories, land, *et cetera*, last forever.

Most property, certainly all significant property, in Haida and other Northwest Coast societies is seen as the inalienable property of the kin group. The wealth distributed at potlatches in connection with crests does not "buy" them but is part of the perpetual process of publicly revalidating their ownership by the kin group. The economic foundation for survival in Northwest Coast societies is, of course, land and resources. An important part of what occurs at potlatches and an essential aspect of crests, is validation of the ownership of land and resources by kin groups. The validation of crest ownership, the reciting of the family's history of the possession of their territory, the passing on of titles, the singing of ancient historical songs in front of hundreds of witnesses at the potlatch over and over in each person's life, are all part of the same process of identifying kin group members and confirming their possession of their lands and resources. Crests, land, names, history and songs all validate each other; they are all tightly interwoven. The idea that crests, histories and potlatches have validation of land ownership as a primary function does not seem to be well understood by MacDonald. Taking a reductionist perspective of crests, focusing on them as material objects can lead to a neglect of their other functions.

In *Chiefs of the Sea and Sky* (1989:20), MacDonald more directly denies the historicity of Haida narratives. First he claims that the Raven cycle is dominant among what he calls Haida myths. I am uncertain how it was that he decided they were dominant. It may be because more of them had been recorded and it is possible that more Raven stories have been recorded because, unlike family-owned histories, the Raven stories could be freely told by anyone. MacDonald goes on to say that in addition to Raven stories, there is another category of myth, individual myths based on archetypal themes. He claims this category of myth involves marriage alliances and access to wealth and that these stories are represented on the crest carvings on poles. To contend that the clan histories revolve around archetypal themes and to leave unrecognized their factual basis, in my interpretation, is to imply that they are fictional stories created as variants on favorite themes in Haida narratives. If there seems to be recurrent themes in the body of Haida historical narratives (or the histories of the other peoples of the area), I believe that is because there are a limited number of major human experiences and that the stories of those major occurrences will seem even more similar in societies with particular cultures, economies, geographies, and worldviews. These can include birth, marriage, death, inheritance, wars, migrations, natural disasters, making a living, encounters with animals, other peoples, the supernatural, and so on.

Again, I reiterate, that the Gitxsan, Tsimshian and Nisga'a consider the *adaa'ox* to be the exclusive property of houses which are not to be told or written by non-house members. Certainly they should not be published against the wishes of the owners. To do so bespeaks regard for the scientific imperative of the western scholar over the moral imperative of the rights of the owners of the property. In 1987 George MacDonald and John Cove chose the scientific imperative over the moral imperative by publishing a two volume collection of Tsimshian narratives (Cove and MacDonald 1987; MacDonald and Cove 1987). These narratives had originally been collected by Marius Barbeau and William Beynon but never published. These stories were published against the direct wishes of the Gitxsan (Don Ryan, pers. com.) who regarded them as the property of the houses involved in the events recorded in the narratives. Cove and MacDonald even admitted in print that there were objections to the publication by "one native organization," but because "they were already in the public domain," they decided that the narratives should be "given to the general public"

(1987:VII). Cove and MacDonald claim their right to publish and the public right to know is greater than the right of the Gitxsan, Tsimshian and Nisga'a to protect their highly valued property.

In addition to violating the property rights of the owners in publishing the narratives, Cove and MacDonald also imply that their scientific objectivity gives them superior understanding of Tsimshian culture than that of culture members. In the introduction to these volumes, Cove and MacDonald (1987:X) made their position on the historicity of the stories clear when they said that the Tsimshian clans are "best thought of as social categories having fictive kinship characteristics." One of the primary purposes of the *adaa'ox* is to record the relationships between the houses within each clan as, through time, they have grown, subdivided, and migrated. If the kinship within the clan is fictive, then the stories which purport to document those relationships must, logically, be fictive too.

A particularly disparaging and ethnocentric view of the *adaa'ox* is presented by English professor, Ralph Maud (1982:158-162, 1993:ix-x). Not only does he refuse to recognize the stories as historical, he makes insulting comments about the entirety of Gitxsan culture as well as the cultures of other Northwest Coast peoples. A particularly illustrative example is one referring to the potlatch in which he states, "lineage boasting in the interminable garage sales called potlatches" (2000:39). One collection of Gitxsan stories upon which he comments is *Visitors Who Never Left* (Robinson 1974). These stories were translated by Gitxsan chief, Ken Harris, Haxpegwatxw, of the Killer Whale Clan of Gitsegukla. Ken Harris recorded them from his uncle, Arthur McDames, the former Haxpegwatxw from whom Ken inherited his chief's title. Arthur McDames was known in the Gitxsan community as a knowledgeable and respected chief and Ken Harris is his rightful heir. Maud claims that the authenticity of the work will be suspect until examined by linguist experts, paternalistically placing the authority of western experts over that of knowledgeable culture members.

Maud also criticized Walter Wright's, *Men of Medeek,* (1962) which was recorded by Will Robinson. This work relates a long series of events in the history of the Fireweed Clan of Gitselasxw. It is well regarded by Tsimshian-speaking people (Violet Smith, pers.com.) and others who have invested considerable effort into studying Tsimshian narratives (Marsden 1987:212). Of *Men of Medeek* Maud says (1982:159-160),

> ....Walter Wright seems to have wanted to tell Will Robinson what amounts to the histories, territories, and laws of the Kitselas, and involves a great deal of feuding and unnecessary bloodshed and treachery. Walter Wright in his Preface says that he wanted the record written down so that his scattered people may "come to have an honest pride in their lineage, and deeds performed by their ancestors." He will probably fail in this aim; for his powers of narration are not sufficient to make squabbling over territory and massacre for the sake of "honour" seem laudable.

The statement is infuriatingly judgmental and ethnocentric. Maud criticizes the morality of the history from his ethnocentric perspective. What he deems as "unnecessary squabbling" is likely to be seen by those whose history it is as events which were essential to their physical and cultural survival. It is from house-owned territories that the peoples of the area derived their living. That a house would fight to defend its territory should not be unexpected. The most significant point here regarding Maud's critique, in my opinion, is that he does not have the authority to judge what was deemed necessary by members of a culture which he clearly does not understand, a culture which is far removed in values, time and place from anything understood by Maud. According to anthropologist, Andie Palmer, Maud's treatment of the oral histories as literature and subjecting them to literary criticism "is about as appropriate as telling someone that their grandmother's death was 'boring'" (pers. com.).

Maud also comments on Wilson Duff's *Histories, Territories and Laws of the Kitwanccol* (1959). These stories were recorded in 1958 when Wilson Duff and Michael Kew went to the Gitxsan village of Kitwancool to negotiate the removal of a number of old totem poles. Such removal is contrary to the usual practice of the Gitxsan so the chiefs allowed the removal of the poles on the condition that their "histories, territories, and laws" be recorded for posterity. The chiefs considered it important to have their knowledge recorded in written form for future generations because of the decline in the transmission of oral knowledge. Maud (1982:160) compared this work with Walter Wright's saying, "*Histories, Territories, and Laws* is of the same genre, an apologia for the aristocratic families, a series of heraldic glosses...."

In this statement, Maud demonstrates his ignorance of the most basic structures of Gitxsan society. He contends that the *adaa'ox* are an "apologia for the aristocratic families." In fact, all Gitxsan families are "aristocratic" families. Ranking in Gitxsan society is primarily within families rather than between. Each house is independent, owning land, resources, hereditary names and other forms of cultural property. No house or individual has authority over other houses or their members. Although houses are ranked relative to each other, this ranking changes over time and is largely ceremonial. It does not give an individual or a house any rights to the property of others or authority to make decision on their behalf. So, if all Gitxsan families are aristocratic, what are they apologizing for and to whom?

In Maud's comments on *The Histories, Territories, and Laws of the Kitwancool* he continues the criticism saying (1982:161), "....no one could call these stories aesthetic accomplishments, family crest narratives rarely are; they are heavy on events but very light on plot." Maud seems to consider the *adaa'ox* as literature which should be written for his entertainment. If he had understood that the stories are historical in nature, not just literary, it would be absurd to complain about their lack of plot.

Although most western readers of *adaa'ox* would not have the information necessary to judge the stories regarding their historical validity, those who profess to be expert enough to publish on the topic should make some attempt to investigate why the Gitxsan are so insistent about the historicity of their *adaa'ox*. To do otherwise is poor scholarship from a western academic stance. To confuse history with art is a significant mistake which clearly invalidates criticisms predicated on such a presumption. Maud has devoted much of his career to examining Northwest Coast oral narratives. Surely he is aware of the most basic tenets of anthropology including that of cultural relativism. Even a most rudimentary understanding of this principle would preclude the expression of such ethnocentric and disparaging comments about another culture. Even the fundamental principle of respect is neglected in Maud's treatment of Gitxsan *adaa'ox*.

In a more recent work (1993) Maud does not exhibit a position which is any more enlightened or respectful of the *adaa'ox* than those expressed earlier. In this work he complains that the titles given to the stories collected by Tsimshian, Henry Tate, between 1903 and 1913 are "very curious;" therefore he retitles them "to reflect more accurately what seems to be the focus of the tale" (1993:ix-x). What is really curious is that the stories are seen to need to have titles at all. The Tsimshian and related peoples do not give their stories titles. These are devices which Tate has assigned for the convenience of the western reader. Most of the titles given by Tate contain the word "history," since that is what they are in the Tsimshian view rather than "tales." Maud does not recognize the stories as histories and, therefore, finds it curious that they should be entitled so. Maud does not seem to recognize the irony in the statement that he, someone foreign to the culture, makes in claiming to give the stories "more accurate" titles than those assigned by a culture member.

The linguist John Enrico presents a very different attitude regarding oral histories than that expressed by Maud. He expressly refuses to make judgements of Haida culture from a western perspective. In his volume of edited and re-translated stories originally collected by John Swanton in 1900 and 1901, he lists the three types of stories distinguished by the Haida (1995:4). These he translates as myth, lineage history, and real history or news. Enrico says, for the Haida, myth "is any story that is not about this world as we know it;" although myth is not temporally restricted. He goes on to say that the boundary between myth and lineage history is somewhat blurred; but "for the most part, however, the lineage histories can be said to begin where the major creation myths leave off" (1995:4-5). That Enrico sees the boundary between myth and lineage history as blurred, may indicate that story types are not necessaritly discreet but may overlap. I appreciate Enrico's stance (1995:11) when he writes, "There is no place in this volume for 'interpretation' of myths." Enrico has sought the Haida perspective of the stories, and refuses to deny their validity within the culture which produced them by interpreting them from a western perspective. The Haida apparently appreciate Enrico's approach and as his work, which is respected by them (Jaalen Edenshaw, pers. com.).

Julie Cruikshank has, at times, displayed what seems to be an ambivalent attitude regarding the meaning and historicity of the oral narratives of the people of the Yukon. She has contended (1990:346), "well intentioned but uncritical use of oral tradition developed in one cultural context as though they can be equated with tangible historical evidence may lead to misinterpretation of more complex messages in narrative." I believe Cruikshank may be both correct and incorrect in this statement. I fully agree that there may be complex messages in narratives but I also believe that the obvious historical meaning may be "true" more often than is believed by Cruikshank and many other writers. I agree with Cruikshank (1991:141) that the narratives usually have multiple levels of meaning. A story which contains historical information may also contain moral lessons for living in today's world; technological, geographical and social information; and other meanings. Elders may choose to tell a particular history to illustrate a point they are trying to make in the present. However, I also credit the oral narratives of the peoples of the Yukon and their neighbours with having considerable historically factual information which can be considered history in the western sense. The Gitxsan view the *adaa'ox* as histories first - as accurate presentations of events which occurred in the past. In some cases, moral or other lessons can be drawn from the same stories and will be pointed out, but lessons, moral and other, are essentially a by-product of the history. The same may be true of the Yukon peoples' perspective on their stories.

In a slightly more recent publication which I expect has been has been more heavily influenced in its presentation by the Yukon peoples themselves since it was written for the Council of Yukon Indians, Cruikshank (1991) seems to be more accepting of the historical validity of the oral narratives. In this work she also expands the definition of the content of oral narratives to include what is usually called traditional environmental knowledge by western scholars. The combination of history, traditional values, and cultural and technological knowledge in Yukon narratives is reminiscent of what Art Mathews said about the *adaa'ox* containing not only true history, but the *yaḡumxtxw* (wisdom) and the *gan didls* (way of life) of the Gitxsan (Mathews 1988:4524). The wisdom and the way of life of the Gitxsan can be drawn from the oral histories, but the importance of the oral histories in which other kinds of knowledge is embedded must not be overlooked. The bodies of oral narrative of the other peoples of the area seem to indicate a similar emphasis on the importance of the historical content. I expect that is why, in attempting to record "life histories" from elderly Yukon women, Cruikshank, found that "they quite firmly shifted the emphasis to 'more important' accounts they wanted me to record - particular events central to traditional narrative" (1990:4). Here she refers to the story of the Wolf Clan people traveling down the Stikine River under the glacier, a historical event which, according to very widespread oral histories, had considerable influence in shaping the cultural geography of the Yukon, Southeast

Alaska and northwestern British Columbia. Many groups of people throughout his region contend that they are descendants of the people involved in that event. I believe that what Mrs. Angela Sidney was trying to tell Cruikshank was that she had to begin her personal history with that ancient story because she and her relatives (in the widest sense) owe their very existence to that crucial event and all the other crucial events which shaped her society and those other societies whose ancestors were involved in the incident. Cruikshank claims she eventually came to see oral narratives as a window on ways that the past is culturally constituted and dicussed by Yukon elders, but I am still left with the impression that she sees the historical aspects of the stories as secondary since she refers to them as "mythology" embedded in the life history (1990:2). Cruikshank also states, "Gradually, I came to see oral tradition not as 'evidence' about the past but as a window on ways the past is culturally constituted and dicussed" (1990:14) which seems a disclaimer to the validity of the stories as history.

The ambivalence I sensed in Cruikshank's earlier work remains in her more recent work, *The Social Life of Stories*, published in 1998. She continues to emphasize that the meaning of oral narratives is not transparent (1998:2). I would certainly agree that the meaning is not transparent to those who do not share cultural understandings with the storyteller but I would argue that the elders' purpose in telling some kinds of oral narratives is to transparently present a history. I would argue that this is the purpose of Gitxsan elders telling of oral histories. Metaphors and moral lessons might be contained within the story, but the primary function of telling *adaa'ox* is to relay information about historical events. And the primary reason for telling historical narratives is to situate the teller in a kin group connected to a particular territory.

Cruikshank also contends that the meaning of narratives is "reworked" from one generation to the next. She says, "Personal narratives based on shared metaphors and responses to common problems in one generation may be reworked quite differently by the next" (Cruikshank 1998:2). This may be true with some kinds of stories but that is precisely what Gitxsan elders attempt to prevent in the telling of their oral history. As Mary Johnson said, "It is very important to get the *adaa'ox* right because it's our true history" (interview 24/8/84). The objective is to maintain a continuous record of past events as reliably as possible over a very long period of time. Cruikshank reports that when, after an elders' conference, it was suggested that the transcripts of the elder's words be translated into standard English, the elders vehemently objected. According to Cruikshank, the elders' concern was not that of the anthropologists, that their words might be disembodied, decontextualized and crystallized, but that translating their words might destroy the intended meaning (1998:15-16). Clearly, the elders believe that they are the ones best able to present meaning through stories as they wish it to be presented; they did not want to be reinterpreted even into standard English. This presents an ethical and professional dilemma with which I am always concerned in my work. I try very hard to present the meaning as the speaker meant it rather than reading in meaning which was never intended. The primary method by which I do this is by accepting what culture members say about their culture, never assuming that I, as an outsider, understand cultural institutions better than culture members do themselves. I can never be certain that I fully understand what culture members tell me exactly as they understand it but I avoid assuming that my interpretation of their behaviour and beliefs is more accurate than their own. Ideally, culture members present their own stories with the meaning intended by them but even that will not prevent misinterpretation entirely because every listener and every reader will necessarily construe the stories in their own way as part of the process of making sense of what is heard or read.

Having just said that culture members are best able to present their stories in their own way, I find myself in the awkward position of having to comment on a culture member's presentation of her own oral history. I am referring to the work of Nora Marks Dauenhauer and her husband, Richard Dauenhauer. I find their work (1987:21) to be somewhat contradictory regarding Tlingit narratives. On the one hand, they discuss the stories as if they are historical, as when they say that the narratives can provide evidence for the ancient habitation of their territory by the Tlingit (1987:3); but, on the other hand, they repeatedly call them "literature" (1987:3, 6, 11) and say they can be "studied thematically" (1987:21). It is not possible from the introductory book in Nora and Richard Dauenhauer's series on Tlingit oratory to distinguish the voices of each of the two authors. They write as one voice.

Although it is primarily cultural anthropologists and linguists who have commented on Northwest Coast oral history, some archaeologists have become aware of the historicity of Northwest Coast oral narratives. Archaeologist Knut Fladmark has undertaken investigation of early sites on Haida Gwaii (Skoglund's Landing, Kasta and Lawn Point), and has indicated that he is aware of Haida oral history as recorded by John Swanton (Fladmark 1989:201). Fladmark writes:

> ....traditional folk histories, including those of Native Americans, have been indiscriminately and often arrogantly discarded as poetic, metaphoric and essentially non-historical. Of course oral folklore is the literature and poetry of non-literate peoples, but it also may include a substantial historical element....The oral traditions of the Haida and Tsimshian seem particularly rich in explicitly historical descriptions....(1989:218)
>
> ....information from two different world views - the scientific perspective as currently understood and traditional folkloric knowledge about their ancient past as known by early 20th Century Haida - appears to be in generally good agreement about many major elements of Queen Charlotte Islands prehistory (1989:219).

Fladmark even goes so far as to suggest that Haida oral histories relate events occurring as far back as the Pleistocene (1989:218-219). Other archaeologists working on the Northwest Coast have found enough evidence to become convinced that the peoples of the area remember 10,000 years of history. One of these is Fladmark's student, Daryl Fedje. Fedje has undertaken many years of archaeological investigation in Haida Gwaii, particularly on early period sites. Fedje's team consists, primarily, of Haida fieldworkers and he has worked closely with Wanagan, a well-known Haida oral historian Barb Wilson, a Haida Parks Canada employee, and Haida elders. Fedje *et al.* say, "Haida oral history maintains they originated in this area and that both archaeology and paleoecology fit well to this history (Fedje *et al.* 1996a:149). Phil Hobler, Fladmark's colleague at Simon Fraser University, has told me that Nuxalk oral histories and the archaeological evidence also correspond (pers. com.).

Finally, I will make a brief comment on the well-known writings of Claude Levi-Strauss regarding Northwest Coast oral narratives and mythology generally. I set the writings of Levi-Strauss aside from those of all the previous writers because his work is entirely theoretical in nature. Levi-Strauss did no fieldwork among the peoples of the Northwest Coast nor does he indicate in his writings (1963, 1979, 1983, 1987a, 1987b) that he ever spoke to members of the cultures upon which he comments. In *The Story of Asdiwal* (1983) he discusses versions of a narrative collected by Boas and recorded primarily in *Tsimshian Mythology* (1916). Beyond the setting of the story he gives no veracity to the possibility of there being any historical fact found in this story.

At a later date, Levi-Strauss was exposed to Will Robinson's *Men of Medeek* (1962) and Ken Harris' *Visitors Who Never Left* (1974) which he admitted seem to have historical elements (1979, 1987b). Even then, when he recognizes similar elements in different stories, such as when a fight between families begins over a woman's unfaithfulness to her husband and the subsequent cycle of revenge, Levi-Strauss attributes those resemblances to structural similarities of the mind rather than considering the possibility that similar events can occur within a society over a long period of time.

Levi-Strauss has approached the study of narrative with the purpose in mind of analyzing the structure of the "myth" thereby ruling out the possibility of considering its historicity. In fact, from the hundreds available to him, he has chosen as his most well-known example *The Story of Asdiwal* (1983), a story with a great number of apparently mythic elements rather than others which appear more historical in nature. This, of course, is to be expected since structured analysis of myth was his intended purpose but for those who see these stories as histories which have bearing on their existence this kind of analysis is purposeless and detrimental to their interests. This kind of anthropology is viewed as the most objectionable kind by the "objects" of study because it is exploitation and objectification of the worst kind, distorting the reality of the "subjects" beyond recognition, and benefitting no one but the writer.

As can be seen from this overview of the positions taken by a number of western writers regarding the historical validity of the northern Northwest Coast oral histories, a variety of perspectives have been expressed. A number of these writers fail to consider culture members' understandings of their stories, the implication being that the western observer's analysis is superior. The scientific principle of objectivity as superior to subjectivity may engender that perspective. This failure to adequately consider culture members' perspective of their own cultural property leads to works on oral history (and other ethnographic subjects) in which those being written about do not recognize themselves. When culture members are able to recognize themselves in scholarly works, I believe that is a good indication that the work is accurate. Increasingly, indigenous people are demanding that their own voice be heard when they are represented. They are demanding relationships with the researchers who represent them be built on knowledge, experience and trust. Linda Smith says (1999:15), "In Maori language there is the expression *Kanohi kitea* or the 'seen face,' which conveys the sense that being seen by the people - showing your face, turning up at important cultural events - cements your membership within a community in an ongoing way and is part of how one's credibility is continually developed and maintained." I had the same experience in Gitxsan territory where elders want to know who you are in relationship to the community rather than what your academic qualifications are. To elders, it is very important that they trust researchers and that they know the researcher will be able to understand what they are about to say, before they "open up their box of treasures." Real trust can only be built over time and real understanding can only be built with experience. Community members are usually more likely to be able to fulfill these ideals, but outside researchers who take the time to build good relationships can, as well. As awareness of the possible political implications of research grows in indigenous communities, community members are increasingly setting the agenda for research and determining who the researchers will be.

Researchers interested in oral history will be able to understand them in a manner more akin to culture members if they appreciate that oral histories are just one form of indigenous knowledge. They are an integral part of an entire body of knowledge. Gitxsan oral histories cannot be understood without knowledge of Gitxsan social structure, land tenure system, worldview, spirituality and other aspects of culture, which is exactly what academics like Levi-Strauss and Maud have endeavored to do. Attempting to interpret oral histories without contextual information is like trying to understand moose with no knowledge of their dietary needs, necessary climatic conditions and predator-prey relations. For any scholar to assume that it is possible to make any meaningful sense of an oral history just by reading the story with little or no context is as faulty an assumption as saying one knows everything there is to know about an animal by eating a piece of it. This is exactly what Levi-Strauss, Maud and others have done in presenting their analyses of Tsimshian and Gitxsan oral histories without understanding other aspects of the culture. Even trying to obtain contextual information from ethnographic sources can be a spurious enterprise because anthropological writings are considered notoriously unreliable in indigenous circles. According to Maori scholar, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, "It galls us that Western researchers and intellectuals can assume to know all that it is possible to know of us, on the basis of their brief encounters with some of us" (1999:1).

The Gitxsan are familiar with the kind of research Smith is referring to. The most well known ethnographic work on the Gitxsan, John Adams' *Gitxsan Potlatch* (1973), is considered wildly inaccurate by culture members (D. Ryan, B. Clifton, V. Smith, M. Wilson, pers. com.). One of the central theses of Adams' book is that Gitxsan houses are not kinship units but corporate entities recreated each year to take advantage of fluctuating resources. He contends this is necessary since house boundaries do not change from year to year while house populations and available resources on house territories do, therefore, house membership must change. What Adams does not understand is the very simple fact that house memberships do not change from year to year but that if a house is short of a particular resource on a particular year, some of the house members seek temporary permission to access resources on their spouses' or fathers' territories. This does not affect house membership in any way. Many, many other examples of misunderstandings great and small could be given from Adams' work but I will just present one more, a favourite of the Gitxsan. Adams contends that chiefs contribute $20 at feasts because they have ten fingers and ten toes (1973:27). This is absolutely absurd and seems to fall into the category of having some fun at the expense of the gullible anthropologist.

In spite of the fact that Adams' work is considered wildly inaccurate by the people it is supposed to represent, works like his still get published because those in charge of editorial decisions are other western scholars, not the Gitxsan. That the West usually values scholarly opinion over indigenous perspectives was pointed out when I testified in *Delgamuukw*. Under cross-examination, Michael Goldie, for the Province, asked me how it was that I thought I was qualified to dispute John Adams' work on Gitxsan social structure considering the fact that he has a Ph.D. from Harvard, undertook a year of research and attended two potlatches. My reply was: years living as a community member, over three years of research and seventy potlatches attended. Goldie did not seem to be impressed.

Indigenous Critiques of Western Scholarship

The numbers of indigenous people reading what has been written about their cultures by western scholars is growing exponentially and a body of criticism is developing in response. This critique is often seen as originating with Vine Deloria's 1969 essay *Anthropologists and Other Friends* in *Custer Died For Your Sins*. Over thirty years ago, Vine Deloria accused anthropology of being irrelevant, harmful even, to native people. With wit and acumen he said, "Indians have been cursed above all other people. Indians have anthropologists" (1969:83). Anthropologists, Deloria said, do "pure research" which is "absolutely devoid of useful application" (1969:85). "Their concern is not the ultimate policy that will affect the Indian people, but merely the creation of new slogans and doctrines by which they can climb the university totem pole" (Deloria 1969:98). Deloria's opinion of anthropologists has not entirely changed in thirty years. While he concedes the practice of anthropology has improved considerably since the late 1960s (Deloria 1997:210), he contends that it "continues to be a deeply colonial discipline" (1997:211) which "has taken the values and institutions of Western civilization, acted as if they represented normality, rationality, and sanity" (1997:220) demeaning indigenous societies and their beliefs.

Deloria's critique has been widely read and dicussed in anthropological circles and continues to be dicussed into the present (Biolsi and Zimmerman 1997). I would argue that, like other forms of indigenous knowledge, the subject of this thesis, oral history, generally suffers the same fate in its treatment by western academics - it is often misinterpreted and rejected as invalid, at least implicitly. Postmodern interpretations of cultural materials have resulted in more respectful treatment of cultural knowledge, but, as is illustrated by Cruikshank's work within this perspective (Cruikshank 1990), oral histories may be considered more valuable for their presentation of cultural knowledge rather than as historical records. The body of western scholarship which examines Northwest Coast oral narratives as history is limited. One exception is a recent paper by Jay Miller in which he discusses Tsimshian oral histories. Miller understands that the *adaa'ox* are owned and passed down through houses, can be told in chronological order and span at least 10,000 years since the early postglacial period (Miller

1998:662). Miller relates a clear understanding of the relationship between hereditary names and history when he says,

> names provide the basis of and for Tsimshian history because they are not just remembered, they are inherited to "live again" by another mortal body. Such recursiveness interweaves past, present, and future....(1998:662).

In recent years, postmodernist (Clifford 1983: Geertz 1988; Marcus and Fischer 1986; Marcus 1998) and feminist theorists (Warren 1988; Whittaker 1994) have critiqued positivist research but these perspectives are certainly not ones which dominate western thought. These theories, along with indigenous theories, are generally relegated to the periphery of scholarship. Although there is a growing body of literature and increasing recognition in some western scholarly circles of the value of indigenous knowledge (Freeman 1985, 1988a, 1989; Berkes 1988; Mailhot 1993, Johnson 1992; Waldram 1986), it is still not well understood or widely recognized by westerners as a valid way of knowing. Phyllis Morrow and Chase Hensel (1992) provide an interesting example of how difficult cross-cultural communication and understanding can be. They describe a meeting where non-native Alaskan government resource managers were unable to understand what Yup'ik resource users were saying about resource management, made no attempt to improve communication, and proceed to make decisions with no regard for the Yup'ik perspective (Morrow and Hensel 1992).

Some western scholars accept that indigenous knowledge systems create accurate information which can be confirmed by correlated data derived by scientific methods, but rarely are indigenous methodologies for creating knowledge and the underlying epistomologies accepted as valid. The Morrow and Hensel paper (1992) illustrates this. While the western resource managers were only able to understand resource management based on scientific principles, Yup'ik resource users were trying to convey their belief that disrespect of the animals causes them to decline in numbers (Morrow and Hensel 1992:42). Only knowledge generated by western methods is seen by the majority of the members of western societies, even within the academy, as accurate information. Inquiry among indigenous peoples has been characterized as pre-logical or irrational, thereby playing down the validity of traditional knowledge (Berkes 1993:4).

Oral history is certainly not the only aspect of indigenous knowledge which has been viewed differently by western and indigenous scholars. These varying attitudes extend to physical properties as well, such as land, resources, cultural objects, and even the very remains of our ancestors. Much of the debate over indigenous intellectual property has arisen from the debate in recent years over physical property, particularly regarding human remains. Indigenous people often feel they have been so objectified by academia that even the remains of their ancestors are claimed as someone else's physical and intellectual property (Pullar 1994; Tsosie 1997; White Deer 1997). Whether the property is physical, cultural or intellectual, indigenous people are objecting to their misrepresentation and appropriation. Odawa scholar, Cecil King, says that some anthropologists "have shown themselves to be no more than peeping toms, rank opportunists, interested in furthering their own careers by trading in our sacred traditions" and that "our communities have been cheated, held up to ridicule, and our customs sensationalized" (1997:115). Gros Ventre anthropologist, Marilyn Bentz, contends that because most aboriginal people in North America are literate now and read what is written about them, the potential for harm caused by anthropological works is greater than ever. She says, "If anthropologists are to continue their studies of Native Americans, they must become more conscious of their own motives and ethnocentric biases, and more sensitive to the interests of Native American populations" (Bentz1997:122). Choctaw anthropologist, Dorothy Lippert, claims that indigenous people often find anthropologists to be "intrusive and annoying," that they use knowledge improperly, even sacred knowledge, and that they make Indian people feel more like specimens than people (1997:121).

Western scholars have been dismissive of indigenous knowledge both directly and indirectly, at times overtly criticizing it for not meeting western standards of validation. But the loudest condemnation has been silence. Those western scholars who have not even considered indigenous knowledge in studies which could have benefitted from its inclusion are clearly proclaiming it so irrelevant as to not deserve any consideration at all by serious scholars. From the indigenous perspective such studies which omit large, detailed bodies of relevant information are greatly flawed (Echo-Hawk 1994).

Although, since they became objects of study, indigenous people have complained in their communities about the naivete of western social, cultural and scientific researchers and their inaccurate portrayals of indigenous peoples and cultures, it is only recently that any substantial body of literature has put these criticisms into print. While many community members are able to criticize documents written specifically about them, the literature by indigenous scholars leveling a general critique of western scholarship is small but growing (Battiste and Henderson 2000; Churchill 1994e,1998; Deloria 1999; Henderson 2000; King 1997; Little Bear 2000; Smith 1999; Strickland 1997).

Deloria's critique of western scholarship on indigenous subjects, which began in 1969, has continued through three decades, culminating with *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact* (1995) in which he attacks a number of scientific (particularly, anthropological) theories about indigenous people in North America. The recognition of the influence of Deloria's criticism of western scholarship, particularly anthropology, is such that it was addressed at a session of the American Anthropology Association meetings in 1989 (Biolsi and Zimmerman 1997). In this session and the book that followed, a number of scholars, indigenous and non-indigenous alike, acknowledged the influence of Deloria's paper and the effect it has since had on the discipline of anthropology. In his contribution to this book, Deloria concluded that, although anthropological practice has improved since 1969 (1997:210), "Professors in the classrooms still promulgate outmoded and erroneous characterizations of tribal practices and beliefs" (1997:211). I will return to Deloria's criticism of western scientific methods of knowledge creation later in this chapter.

Deloria's critique of scholarship on indigenous subjects undertaken by western academics expanded the possibilities for other indigenous scholars to critique western scholarship both explicitly and implicitly by producing scholarship with a very distinctive perspective. Creek-Cherokee scholar, Ward Churchill, has been among the most influential North American indigenous scholar presenting an indigenous perspective on a wide variety of issues. Churchill has written prolifically through the 1980s and 1990s producing a number of books, at least two of which (*Indians Are Us?: Culture and Genocide in Native North America* [1994] and *Fantasies of the Master Race: Literature, Cinema and the Colonization of American Indians* [1998]), address the construction of the western image of the Indian as a colonizing and genocidal project.

Other indigenous scholars in North America and other parts of the indigenous world have addressed the issue of the naive, inaccurate or objectionable portrayal of indigenous people by western scholars. One of the foremost claims made by these indigenous scholars (Battiste and Henderson 2000:11, 86; Little Bear 2000:84-5; Smith 1999:1,44) is that the political domination of the West has been accompanied by intellectual domination. This domination, according to indigenous scholars, has led to the belief held by many western scholars, and the populations they inform, that western approaches to knowledge creation are of unquestionable superiority and are universally true. The belief in the universality of science results in the conviction of most westerners that "truth" must always be verified by the methods of science. Knowledge generated by non-western systems is often dismissed as unfounded because the methods used to collect data, record it and analyze it differ from western scientific methods. Indigenous knowledge is holistic, subjective and experiential, does not rely on the western principles of reductionism, objectivism and positivism, and is therefore usually rejected by western scientists as anecdotal, non-methodological and non-quantitative (Wolfe, *et al* 1992:11). Although there is increased awareness among some western scholars that indigenous knowledge can generate information useful to science, it is often accepted reluctantly and is nearly always subject to validation by western methods.

A number of indigenous scholars have argued against the idea of the universality of the western worldview and methods of creating knowledge. Among these are Maori scholars, Roberts and Wills who contend that indigenous knowledge is discounted because it differs from the western paradigm which is considered by the West to be the only correct way of perceiving reality. They say, "in today's globally dominant Western culture, science is assumed to be not simply *a* way of seeing but *the* way of seeing reality" (1998:43). They bolster this assertion, saying that science claims to produce "universal, context-free knowledge" (1998:44). Other indigenous scholars have presented similar arguments to that of Roberts and Wills, contending that western scientific perspectives are not universal and value-free, but that research has a political, social and historical context (Battiste and Henderson 2000:21-28; Litle Bear 2000:77). I would argue that westerners may not be aware of the factors influencing the construction of scientific knowledge, but that indigenous people are often aware of such factors because they do not make the same assumptions about what is real or natural. Smith concurs that scientific activity is not value-free, contending, "research is not an innocent or distant academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions" (1999:5).

The fact that many western researchers give little consideration to the context in which knowledge is created, believing their work to be value neutral and universally applicable, indicates the power of the imperial ideology of which that scholarship is a part. This dominating European intellectual tradition has been labeled "Eurocentrism" by indigenous peoples. Henderson calls it "the cognitive legacy of colonialism" (2000a:58). Henderson emphasizes that Eurocentric beliefs are pervasive in western society, saying "it is an integral part of all scholarship, opinion and law" (2000a:58). Henderson comments more specifically on the role of anthropologists in purveying Eurocentrism, and its implications of the universality and superiority of the western worldview, stating "because they came from the universal European culture, they assumed that their view was an objective one capable of discerning the patterns of another culture" (2000a:68). Of course, anthropology has long held the concept of cultural relativism but truly understanding the concept, when living as a member of a culture which claims that its understanding of the world is universal, is difficult to achieve.

For indigenous people living in a colonial situation, the declaration of the colonizers that their culture and worldview are superior, implies that those of the colonized are inferior which, in turn, implies that the colonized are inferior. Duran *et al.* (1998) discuss the emotional damage suffered by indigenous people whose cultures and identities are disparaged and denied by the assumption of universal western values and understandings. They contend that colonialism has caused Native Americans much suffering, and the denial of that suffering by means of the assumption that the experience, values and ideology of both colonizers and colonized is similar, is to perpetuate "epistemic violence" on the colonized (Duran *et al.* 1998;69). Duran *et al.* (1998:65) call the emotional damage of colonization "historical trauma" and contend it "is a continuing process, maintained via the pressures of acculturative stress." The impetus of acculturative programs and policies is to convince the colonized of the superiority of the dominant worldview and culture, and the meaninglessness of their own. One of the most effective ways to do this is through an education system in which a Eurocentric perspective is unquestioned (Battiste and Henderson 2000:86; Cajete

1994:20; Churchill 1995a:245; Kawagley 1995:101).

Every colonized indigenous person (as well as members of the dominant society) who have been educated in the western system, have been told throughout much of our schooling that the western worldview is the only correct one and that the scientific method (which is a product of the western worldview) is the only way to create knowledge. Because of that totalizing experience, an almost religious acceptance of science as a way of knowing has been instilled in most of us. Few among us have been presented with the alternatives of postpositivist perspectives, certainly not before arriving at university, by which time we have been well indoctrinated into the orthodox perspective. The belief that knowledge can only be created by scientific methods still predominates western thought. At home and in our communities, indigenous people are offered alternative beliefs about reality and alternative ways of knowing but we learn early not to talk about these at school or we will be ridiculed for contradicting scientific orthodoxy. Of this scientific hegemony, Vine Deloria has said (1997:211), "In America we have an entrenched state religion, and it is called science." Just as science is deified, so too, are scientists. Deloria tells us, "Americans have been taught that 'scientists' are always right, that they have no personal biases, and that they do not lie" (1995:20), but Deloria does not attribute to scientists such righteous qualities. Instead, he claims academics are more interested in protecting and enhancing their prestige within the university and their profession than truly creating knowledge, especially knowledge which is accessible to the public (1995:42). He contends that western academics generate an aura of mystique about their work. They do this by specializing narrowly and by focusing on publishing in highly exclusive journals which are inaccessible to non-experts (1995:43). In becoming so narrowly focused, western scientists often have little knowledge of developments outside their fields, which contrasts with the more holistic approach to the generation of knowledge taken by indigenous scholars, according to Deloria (1995:43). I agree with Deloria that western scholars can be very narrowly focused but I do not think all scientists are as Machiavellian as Deloria would sometimes imply. What Deloria says, though, may be true enough to leave him and other indigenous scholars with that conviction.

It is not only indigenous scholars who have dicussed the idea of "science as religion." According to Freeman, science as a "religion" based on faith is not well understood by its practitioners and believers. He says,

> The nature of western science is generally not well understood by its practitioners, though it has been well studied by the historians, philosophers and sociologists of science. However, the writings of these scholars remain unread by many practical men and women of science, who obtain their understanding of scientific culture, usually informally, from their practitioner-mentors. In this way, the ideals and myths of science are passed on to succeeding generations of scientists (1989:94).

Freeman goes on to say that because science is believed to be objective, critical, quantitative, and precise; to be directed towards a rigorous search for truth; to test its findings by objective experimentation and replication; and to subject its findings to critical and impartial peer review, it is believed that improprieties would be easily uncovered and fraud would be rare and easy to detect (1989:94). In fact, Freeman contends, scientific fraud is difficult to detect, harder to prove, and not uncommon. He claims scientists are not guided by objectivity and logic alone, but by subjective passions, ambitions and failings as well (1989:95).

Hess (1995) reinforces Freeman's position regarding potential biases in the production of scientific knowledge. He contends "The story of what constitutes international science and technology today is largely limited to the viewpoint of the experts who are seen to have produced their fundamental principles, and historically those experts have been generally middle-to-upper-class men who were European or of European descent" (1995:viii). Hess suggests a different approach to science that begins with the concept of culture and which asks how perspectives that have historically been excluded can be included (1995:ix). He says the excluded groups and cultures may have new ways of defining what is true and useful (1995:ix). Hess maintains that discussions of these issues must pay attention to the question of power because discussions of multiculturalism and diversity usually involve a party which has the power to impose their views on those on the other side of the issue (1995:ix).

Although many western educators continue to propagate the idea of the near infallibility of science, that utopian image began to erode, particularly in the 1960s, as it became increasingly obvious that there was poverty in the midst of wealth, racism continued unabated, wars and famines abounded, and pollution threatened us all. As David Suzuki said, "we are waking to the dangers of clinging to a faith that science and technology can forever resolve the problems they helped to create in the first place" (Knudtson and Suzuki 1992:xxiii). These realizations gave impetus to the proliferation of postpositivist perspectives but such alternative views are not generally held by western people, and Deloria, Freeman and Hess's statements about science as the American religion still hold true.

As forceful as the criticism of science presented here may sound, I certainly do not deny the great benefits that science has bestowed upon us. I do deny any claims made to its near infallibility and its universality. Western science is a product of the culture that produced it and contains the biases which are imposed by all cultures on their ways of seeing the world and learning and interacting in it. As such, it is just one more way of knowing along with other ways of knowing, all having something to contribute to human understanding. It is through a judicious use of western scientific knowledge and indigenous knowledge that I plan to negotiate my space as an indigenous scholar within the western academy. A number of indigenous academics have written about the obstacles to finding their place in the academy. Discussion of some of them follows.

Because of their possession of western worldviews, scientific methodologies and bodies of knowledge, not only are western methods of knowledge generation considered superior to indigenous ones, but some indigenous scholars contend, the academy considers western scholars superior to indigenous scholars (Deloria 1997:211; Grinde 1994:11; Shanley 1998:136; Smith 1999:70). This is so even when the indigenous scholars are trained in the western academy and this is so (maybe especially so) when the indigenous scholar is a member of the society under study (Deloria 1997:211). When indigenous scholars suggest that they are best able to accurately represent their own culture because they are more familiar with it, they are often accused of presenting some kind of essentialist argument. Historian James Axtell argued that, as more Native American historians entered the profession, greater acceptance would become evident for the "genetic fallacy." The "genetic fallacy," according to Axtell, is one that says only culture members can interpret their own history (1981:10). Donald Grinde, a Yamasee historian, countered Axtell's argument, contending that:

> Native scholars are more concerned with voice than with dominance. As a small part of the population whose voice is often muted by the very people who study us, we see a double standard in such "essentialist" charges, since few people worry about the "genetic threat" of Anglos studying the Founding Fathers or the "gender threat" to women's history (1994:11).

I would contend that the belief in the superiority of their own scholars, commonly held in the West, derives from a number of factors. One of these is a belief that indigenous scholars cannot be as well educated in the intricacies of the academy since it is a product of a western ideology of which indigenous scholars are not part (Deloria 1995:49). This logic has not been shown to apply, a Grinde points out, when indigenous scholars claim expertise of their own culture which is superior to that of westerners who study it, but the exact opposite has been argued (Battiste and Henderson 2000:21; Deloria 1995:50; Shanley 1998:137). Some of the arguments made by western scholars for the superiority of their scholarship over that of members of the culture under study are based on the principle of objectivity (Battiste and Henderson 2000:30; Blaut 1993:9; Noel 1994:60 Rosaldo 1993:30) - a cornerstone of western knowledge creation. The outside observer is assumed to be more objective and, therefore, more accurate in their observations and conclusions. According to Deloria,

> Even with tribal peoples now entering academic fields, there is bias, and most academics deeply believe that an Indian, or any other non-Western person, cannot be an accurate observer of his or her own traditions because that individual is personally involved. It follows to listen to the apologists for many university departments, that an urban, educated white person, who admittedly has a deep personal interest in a non-Western community but who does not speak the language, has never lived in the community, and visits the people only occasionally during the summer, has a better understanding of the culture, economics and politics of the group than do the people themselves (Deloria 1995:49).

Deloria goes on to say, “information possessed by non-western peoples....becomes valid when offered by a white scholar recognized by the academic establishment” (1997:50). Assiniboine scholar, Kate Shanley supports Deloria’s conclusion, contending, "American Indians have been, in effect, second-class citizens in universities, even - or especially - in programs set up to study their cultures" (1998:136). She goes on to say of indigenous scholars, "when they speak as insiders, they may be seen as lacking in academic 'objectivity'" (Shanley 1998:137).

Deloria's conclusion was confirmed in the Delgamuukw trial when the judge was dismissive of the expert witnesses who were Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en (or even "friends" of Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en) because he did not believe they could be objective. The anthropological witnesses for the plaintiffs were dismissed as "advocates" (Cruikshank 1992:25; Fisher 1992:44; McEachern 1991:50; Ridington 1992:12). The judge was unable to see that the witnesses for the provincial and federal governments were just as biased in favour of the position held by the defendants (the province and the federal government) which is also that of most western scholars and legal experts. MacEachern was unable to see the bias in the witnesses position because of the deeply ingrained assumption of the universality and neutrality of it.

Some indigenous scholars (e.g., Battiste and Henderson 2000:33; Churchill 1995:245; Deloria 1995:49) would argue that the academy's claim to privilege in knowledge creation is a result of inherent racism in the system. Deloria contends that the West claims: "for a person or community possessing any knowledge that is not white/Western in origin, verification and articulation are unreliable" (1995:49). Smith supports this position when she says that the western system of education is "part of the historical processes of imperialism" (1999:65) in which indigenous knowledge is dismissed as inherently inferior to western knowledge. Tewa scholar, Gregory Cajete, discusses the Native American experience in the western education system, saying, "Indian students' experience is wrought with contradictions, prejudice, hypocrisy, narcissism, and unethical predispositions at all levels" (1994:19). James Youngblood Henderson speaks of "the cognitive prison imposed upon us by our Eurocentric educations" (2000b:11). In the western education system, from kindergarten to graduate school, indigenous knowledge is ignored, discouraged, dismissed and disparaged. The implication of this for indigenous students is that they, as human beings, deserve the same treatment.

John Moore (1998) contends that the competitive, confrontational, intolerant attitude prevalent in the western education system may derive from the origin of universities as church-run institutions. Such schools were organized to demonstrate the truth and superiority of Christianity rather than to illuminate students about other points of view. This attitude was carried over into other disciplines, according to Moore (1998:296). Moore presents an example of the conflict between the confrontational attitude in the western educational process and the respect and tolerance expected in a traditional indigenous education. In his example, a traditional Pawnee student, Robert Fields, steadfastly refused to criticize a variety of theorists in his doctoral defense. Eventually the committee had to decide if there was something wrong with Mr. Fields or something wrong with the western system of education that demands criticism, conflict and intolerance of the views of others (Moore 1998:297).

Part of the irony of being an indigenous person in the western education system is becoming involved in the competitive mode that is expected. Those of us brought up with traditional values were taught to be cooperative more than competitive, as I was. We were taught that success is more likely to derive from cooperation than competition and that we have a social responsibility to each other that takes precedence over personal gain. At the same time, many of us are motivated to participate in academia because we want to confront what has been said about us and done to us. Many of us get involved in academia in an effort to effect healing in our communities which can only be accomplished by confronting the erroneous assumptions about us and our political oppression. The source of our oppression and malaise is the Eurocentric theories that support colonial relationships as they are constructed. This is a difficult position to be in which can create conflict between our traditional values and how we are expected to behave in academia. The result is that many of us write hard words about oppressive colonial policies and racist behaviours while being very accepting of individuals unless they prove themselves to be promulgators of our oppression. Although I admire Robert Fields in maintaining his traditional values concerned with treating others with respect, I also believe that someone needs to say what Deloria, Churchill, LaDuke, Trask, Smith and other indigenous scholars say that reveals the mechanisms of our oppression. While I am forced to grade my student's work and feel I must arm them with the information they need to be able to deconstruct what is said about oppressed peoples, I also try to reduce competition and encourage a cooperative atmosphere in their studies. Respect is at the core of indigenous values while disdain is the core of the critique of the work of others which is expected in academia. This creates dissonance for me at times, and misgiving when it does not, but I have to remind myself that to acquiesce is to agree to our own destruction.

Ward Churchill, Creek-Cherokee, is an indigenous scholar who forcefully refuses to acquiesce. In my opinion, he has developed one of the most explicit and concise explications confronting the thesis of the universality and exclusive legitimacy of western knowledge. In his paper, *White Studies: The Intellectual Imperialism of U.S. Higher Education* (1995a), he charges that the American education system is essentially a program of "White Studies" in that "The curriculum is virtually totalizing in its emphasis, not simply upon an imagined superiority of Western endeavors and accomplishments, but upon the notion that the currents of European thinking comprise the only really 'natural' - or at least truly useful - formation of knowledge/means of perceiving reality" (Churchill 1995a:246). Churchill contend, "this sort of monolithic pedagological reliance upon a single cultural tradition constitutes a rather transparent form of intellectual domination" (1995a:246). While education is presented in

American society as a democratizing opportunity available to all citizens, according to Churchill, it has been defined exclusively by the Euroamerican elite (1995a:246). Complaints about educational content by Americans not of European origin have led to what Churchill calls the "contributionist approach" to remedy in which the contributions of Native or African Americans are thrown into the curriculum but the methodological and conceptual parameters remain unquestioned (1995a:246).

Indigenous scholars have critiqued western scholarship on indigenous subjects on epistemological, theoretical, methodological and factual grounds. A theoretical critique which has been leveled by Vine Deloria and which I, too, have previously confronted (Harris 1999; Dennis and Harris 1999; Skin, Trahan and Harris 1999) is that in which western scholars develop a thesis which comes to be regarded as true in academia and then other scholars build more propositions upon the original thesis until a large body of "knowledge" is created. New ideas are brought into the discussion without reexamining the original thesis. Some of the central tenets of North American anthropology are considered by many indigenous people to be untrue. If they are untrue, it makes all the knowledge build upon the first faulty premise untrue. Deloria puts it this way, "One theory with dubious validity serves to provide the platform for articulating another theory which has even less to recommend itself and a third theory assumes the first two are correct"(1995:108).

One of the prime examples of this thesis provided by Deloria is the "Pleistocene hit men theory" (1995:108-127). The most well know promulgator of this theory being Paul Martin (1973, 1974). Martin contends that since a large number of animal extinctions occurred immediately following the arrival of humans in the Americas around 12,000 years ago, these first Americans - the Clovis people - must have killed the Pleistocene fauna. Martin's thesis has been questioned by some scholars but it continues to be very influential among many scholars and the non-expert public. This body of theory surrounding the megafaunal extinctions begins with the presumption of the arrival of humans in the Americas about 12,000 years ago and their rapid spread throughout nearly the entirety of both continents within a thousand years. Martin noted the correlation between the arrival of humans and the extinctions and attributed causality to unrestrained big game hunting (1973, 1974). Although some scholars consider climatic change and the transformation of biotic communities that accompanied it, a likely cause of the extinctions (Graham *et al.* 1999), others (Alroy 1999, Stuart 1999) have suggested it was not a sufficient cause. Stuart claims that climate change was a factor in the extinctions but because the extinctions were staggered in Eurasia (where humans already lived) while in the Americas they were coincident with the arrival of humans and rapid, human predation must also have been a factor (1999:5). Alroy contends that the extinction rates at the end of the Pleistocene were much greater than those at the end of other glacial periods, and the rate of extinction was especially high among a selected group of species - large herbivores which are desirable for human consumption, therefore, humans must have been a contributing factor (Alroy 1999:6).

A number of theories about Pleistocene megafaunal extinctions build not only on the Clovis theory of the peopling of the Americas, but also on Martin's theory. These theories include that of MacPhee and Marx (1999) who contend that it was not climate change or over-hunting that killed the megafauna, but "hyperdisease." These are diseases newly introduced into an immunologically naive population with catastrophic consequences (MacPhee and Marx 1999:2). This model accounts for: why rapid extinctions were not seen at the end of the Pleistocene in Eurasia where humans and other animals had a long history of co-existing; why other newly peopled areas saw the same kinds of extinctions; and why no North American extinctions can be attributed to aboriginal people during the Holocene (Preston and Marx 1999). Although this theory does not contend that the indigenous peoples of the Americas purposely eliminated the megafauna, it is still built upon the premise that people first arrived in the Western Hemisphere during the late Pleistocene.

Another theory which presupposes the arrival of humans in the Americas during the late Pleistocene as a cause of megafaunal extinctions, is the "keystone herbivore" hypothesis of Norman Owen-Smith (1999). He advances the idea that large herbivores are "keystone" species because they radically change the environment in their foraging behaviour (1999:7). They keep large areas open and available for grazing by smaller species. As the large herbivores are reduced in number by human predation, the forage for smaller species is reduced, resulting in the gradual extinction of many species (1999:7).

The theories of Alroy, Stuart, MacPhee and Marx, and Owen-Smith are just a few of those which build upon Martin's thesis which assumes the peopling of the Americas took place about 12,000 years ago. If it is not true that the Americas were initially peopled at that date, the body of theory which rests upon it, collapses.

Another example of this kind of theory building upon faulty premises which involves the geographical area of concern to this dissertation is that of one-way cultural influence from Northwest Coast cultures to their interior Dene neighbours. This theory of the Dene as great cultural borrowers has been a commonly held assumption in anthropological circles (Barbeau 1929:3; Borden 1953:39; Drucker 1965:109; Jenness 1929:22; Kobrinsky 1977:201; McMillan 1988:149; J. Smith 1969:8). The Dene peoples are presented in these works as "primitive" cultures which are poor imitations of their more sophisticated coastal neighbours. This belief demonstrates an evolutionary perspective which ranks cultures from primitive to evolved with each struggling to move upward on the evolutionary ladder toward the ideal which is, of course, the West. The primary elements in the borrower argument concern the assumption that the Dene peoples imitated Northwest Coast matrilineal kinship, clans, crests and the other corresponding social and territorial features. The oral histories of the peoples of the area directly contradict that assumption relating how matrilineal kinship reckoning and clans came from the Dene peoples. I have dicussed these issues in more detail elsewhere with Dene coauthors (Dennis and Harris 1999; Skin, Trahan and Harris 1999).

This process of building theory upon theory without reexamining the original idea was characterized by one Gitxsan elder as "the incestuous relationship" of anthropologists (Marie Wilson; pers. com.). She said one anthropologist writes erroneously about a culture, then others read and believe his work and build upon it.

A recently published work which both critiques aspects of western scholarship, and which articulates an indigenous view of scholarship, is that of Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999). I read this book with enthusiasm because Smith confirmed much of what I had been thinking about western and indigenous scholarship. She critiques the dominant scientific paradigm of positivism which is based on the empirical theory of knowledge, claiming that, in this view, understanding is akin to measuring and in which attempts to understand the social world revolve around developing a set of reliable and valid operational definitions of phenomena (1999:42). From an indigenous perspective, according to Smith, research by westerners is located in more than just the positivist tradition.

> It is research which brings to bear, on any study of indigenous peoples, a cultural orientation, a set of values, a different conceptualization of such things as time, space and subjectivity, different and competing theories of knowledge, highly specialized forms of language, and structures of power (1999:42).

Smith discusses research as an aspect of imperialism and presents her thoughts on the possibility of movement towards the decolonization of knowledge and the creation of indigenous scholarship. Regarding the role of research in reproducing imperialist ideology, she says:

> Research is one of the ways in which the underlying code of imperialism and colonialism is both regulated and realized. It is regulated through the formal rules of individual scholarly disciplines and scientific paradigms, and the institutions that support them (including the state). It is realized in the myriad of representations and ideological constructions of the "Other" in scholarly and 'popular' works, and in the principles which help to select and recontextualize those constructions in such things as the media, official histories and school curricula (Smith 1999:8).

One of the most painfully objectifying experiences of indigenous research subjects is having been researched as the subjects of a study of some aspect of the "Indian problem." Although professional researchers today are nearly always sensitive enough to not use such a blatantly objectifying term, the focus of much research, especially in certain fields such as sociology, social work, education and health, is still the "Indian problem." Indigenous researchers and some of the more sensitive non-indigenous researchers have turned that perspective around and are now studying the "White problem." The "White problem" literature can also be called the literature of decolonization.

When I began to read the academic literature regarding aboriginal people in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it was largely framed as a discourse of "the Indian problem" (Cumming 1967; Deprez and Sigurdson 1969; Dosman 1972; Frideres 1972, 1974; Schmeiser 1974; Walsh 1971) Both those who were sympathetic to indigenous people and those who were hostile utilized this frame of reference. In this context, the objective of research was usually to document and analyze the poverty and illness of aboriginal people by gathering statistics on life expectancy, criminality, incidence of disease, infant mortality rates, substandard housing, *et cetera*. The outcome of such research was always a dismal picture presented entirely from the perspective of the western researcher. This perspective usually entailed some kind of notion of cultural deprivation which essentially blamed the victims for their situation. The sympathetic researcher would admit that the poverty and illness was a result of contact with European society but would typically offer as a solution more European social, cultural and economic institutions. The problem was envisioned as incomplete acculturation. It was assumed that indigenous societies were doomed to extinction and that acculturation was the only way that indigenous individuals could survive. The desirability of acculturation was assumed. Words like "colonization," "oppression" and "marginalization" rarely appeared in this body of literature. The strengths of indigenous communities were hardly ever mentioned. Such strengths were probably rarely ascertained by researchers of that time period. They certainly were not offered as possibilities for amelioration of the ills besetting indigenous societies. Indigenous people were not called upon to offer their own solutions, the ability of the colonizers to make decisions on behalf of the colonized was rarely questioned. The objective of research in indigenous communities was often to find solutions to aspects of "the Indian problem." Linda Smith calls this approach to the study of indigenous subjects "problematizing" the indigenous (1999:91) and contends that the West has been obsessed with it.

Although anthropologists may have moved away from the most obvious aspects of the problematizing approach to research of the 1960s, this approach to research and teaching about aboriginal subjects still continues. This "litany of horrors" approach to the study of indigenous peoples still predominates in many colleges and universities as can be witnessed by the continued use a very popular text of this nature, now in its sixth edition, which was used in courses I took twenty-five years ago (Frideres and Gadacz).

This problematizing of the Indian may be most obvious in the research undertaken to provide information to social service programs. These programs and their supporting research assume that the poverty and illness of indigenous individuals can be rectified by finding better ways to fit dysfunctional individuals into the functionality of western society. The idea that it is western society that is dysfunctional or, at least, that the relationship between western and indigenous societies is the problem, is not entertained. Very recently a body of literature has begun to develop which questions these assumptions (Duran, Duran and Brave Heart 1998; Brave Heart and DeBruyn 1998; Duran and Duran 1995). This body of literature is part of what is sometimes called liberation or decolonizing approaches to social work and psychology. This approach to the well-being of indigenous people does not focus on the individual, and especially, does not try to adapt the individual to the dysfunctional position of the colonized within colonial society. Instead, it educates individuals about the cause of their dysfunction and seeks solutions by helping them to regain their identity and place in their own society.

The Paradox of the Indigenous Researcher

If indigenous people have so much to criticize research about, and if western scholarship has furthered and continues to further imperialist ends, why would indigenous people get involved in the enterprise? I suspect that many indigenous scholars have gone through the same kind of conflict I have experienced, and still occasionally experience, and, in the end, have decided that research, writing, teaching, and scholarship are of value to indigenous aspirations. Most indigenous scholars are motivated in their work by the thought of what they can do to improve the situation of their people. This is hardly surprising considering the suffering most of us have experienced in our own lives and have witnessed in our families and communities. To not make an effort to have our own voice heard as widely as possible is to acquiesce. As Linda Smith says, "To acquiesce is to lose ourselves entirely and implicitly agree with all that has been said about us" (1999:4).

Although indigenous people in academia are afforded an opportunity to have their voice heard on issues of importance to them and their communities, a price may be paid. In being more concerned with indigenous issues and less concerned with disciplinary and university issues, a price is paid in terms of tenure, promotion, pay, pensions, grants and other benefits received by academics. According to Hawaiian scholar, Haunani-Kay Trask, considerable effort has been expended by other faculty members and the administration at the University of Hawaii to silence her political views (1993b, 1993c). She had great difficulty getting hired (1993b:213) and getting tenure (1993b:217). Trask was eventually forced to make a racism/sexism grievance against the university. Before that was settled she said (1993b:203):

> I lived through a five-year battle (with student-community support) against all manner of oppressive and exploitative conditions: racism by individual faculty and by the institution as a whole; attempts to prevent my written and verbal expressions of critical political views; violation of the academic freedom to teach certain subjects and ideas, and petty daily harassment on the job.

The institutional racism faced by indigenous faculty members is not always as overt as that faced by Trask, but I can attest from personal experience, and from what other indigenous faculty members have told me, that it is an obstacle. Racism within the western educational system is a reality, but indigenous scholars may also, sadly, face challenges from the indigenous community as well.

In the aboriginal community, being a researcher automatically makes one an object of suspicion because research is often seen as theft of valuable cultural property for which little is ever returned. Indigenous people do not see the value in gathering or creating knowledge for knowledge's sake, especially when that knowledge clearly profits those who belong to the society which oppresses the community. Indigenous people can often be heard to complain about the wealth accrued from their knowledge by researchers. Western academics often scoff at this since they are generally not highly paid in terms of their own society but in comparison to those from whom they extract the information upon which they base their careers, they are paid very well indeed. Indigenous people usually find it very insulting when western researchers often refuse to pay them on the grounds that it will "bias the research." A common response by the objects of research is that if the researcher is being paid for his work then those who provide the information should be paid too.

Aboriginal people are also suspicious of researchers because of their awareness that the information can be put to uses which are detrimental to their interests. Probably the most common situation of this type is where information gathered by researchers is utilized against the aboriginal community in court cases and land claims.

All of these concerns indigenous people have with western researchers may also be applied to indigenous researchers who might be seen as representatives of western institutions rather than the community, especially if the research project has not been initiated by the community. The western education of the indigenous researcher and his involvement in western institutions can set him or her apart from the community. There can also be problems for the indigenous researcher specifically associated with community membership such as belonging to one faction within the community while trying to obtain information from a member of another faction.

In the academic community, indigenous scholars are criticized based on a number of factors. One such argument, often coined as the "real Indian" argument by non-scholars, is frequently leveled against aboriginal people for not living in tipis and wearing skin clothing. The more sophisticated scholarly version of this argument is that indigenous intellectuals cannot present the authentic voice of their people because they are no longer of the people due to their western education and involvement in western institutions. On the other hand, those indigenous scholars who attempt to bring a more traditional voice into the academy are trivialized for presenting information or utilizing methods which are incompatible with and irrelevant to the academy. Other criticisms of the indigenous scholar named by Smith are dismissal of our discussion as a "nativist" discourse which is seen to be naive, contradictory and illogical (1999:14) or what we say is dismissed as "some modernist invention of the primitive" (Smith 1999:14).

Indigenous scholars teaching in native studies or First Nations studies programs (and those teaching in other ethnic study programs) are considered by many not to be experts in anything in the western sense since they do not teach in one of the "regular" disciplines and they are ghettoized because of it (Churchill 1995a:255). Certainly the perception of tokenism clings to indigenous university faculty members. I have experienced this explicitly when another teacher told me outright I was probably hired because I am an Indian. The individual who leveled this accusation was hired by the university with significantly less teaching, research and community experience than me.

In spite of the fact that many indigenous individuals and, sometimes entire communities, have been offended by researchers and the western idea of research, they have become involved in the enterprise for the simple reason that the research needs of indigenous communities are great. At any one time, most indigenous communities in North America are involved in research projects of various types. These projects may involve gathering information on language and culture to be taught to children in community schools. Research projects on health, legal and infrastructure needs are common. Any kind of land title question can generate enormous need for information. The very individuals who are offended by the research process may find themselves involved. This is another reason why, in spite of the difficulties faced by indigenous scholars, our numbers continue to grow and our voices are being more widely heard. Even though communities may be leery of anyone undertaking research, it is likely that the indigenous researcher will face less opposition than the western researcher. This issue will be dealt with in more detail in the methodology chapter.

An obstacle which many indigenous individuals involved in academia find considerable is theory. Although indigenous scholars are often mystified by theoretical frameworks developed within western academia (Smith 1999:29), we too, have theoretical orientations. These indigenous theories have rarely been explicated. This is what I am trying to accomplish in this dissertation. I expect that many indigenous researchers are unaware that the principles they hold which make their way of seeing the world different from that of westerners, can be called theory. The mystification of theory in western academic disciplines has been such that we have been led to believe that only great thinkers with outstanding minds are capable of developing theory. What also interferes with an indigenous conception of theory is that in the West theories are considered to be the invention of unique individuals with new insights where indigenous people have been taught that there are no new insights, that thought is the product of socialization in a particular society, not the invention of an individual. So in this thesis I am not trying to "create" something new, rather to explicate that which already exists. From an indigenous perspective, western theories, too, are the products of society rather than of an individual but in indigenous societies knowledge is seen as cumulatively created communal property while in the West knowledge is seen more as the property of the individual who publishes it first, although with recognition of predecessors.

In addition to facing barriers within the academy, indigenous scholars face impediments in the community, some of which are not shared by non-indigenous scholars. One of these is that community researchers must live with the consequences deriving from their actions as researchers on a daily basis. That is not to say that researchers who are not community members do not suffer consequences if their research is considered inappropriate or poorly done by community members. I have witnessed non-community members suffer consequences for research activities considered unacceptable by communities in that they were not invited back to participate in projects. In one extreme case of which I am aware, a researcher wrote such an inaccurate and offensive book about a community that a band council resolution was enacted forbidding her from entering the community again. In this extreme case, many of the researcher's colleagues were aware of her expulsion by the community but in other cases, the consequences of research deemed inappropriate or offensive by the community are not as great because the rejection is more subtle. In such cases, not only may his or her colleagues not be aware of the rejection, the spurned individual may not even be aware of it. This was made clear when we were preparing for the

Delgamuukw land claim case and an anthropologist who had written a book which is universally despised by Gitxsan who have read it, wrote to offer his services. The letter was passed around the office where the most common reactions were anger and amusement at his arrogance and his ignorance of how he and his work were perceived in the community.

While there can be consequences for the career of a researcher who offends an aboriginal community, these are probably not usually profound. Such a researcher could switch his focus to theoretical work, could relocate his interests to a distant community where the people were unaware of his reputation, he could take up international issues, he could rework his original research within academia where fewer community members would be aware of his work, and so on. While a number of options are available to the researcher from outside the community, the community researcher does not always have the same options.

Divergent Worldviews, Divergent Ways of Knowing

If those who create knowledge by western science-based methods are in such vehement disagreement with those who create knowledge by indigenous methods, the question arises regarding the source of those very different ways of knowing. The answer lies primarily in the disparate worldviews which underlie indigenous and western methods of knowledge formation. At this point I must reiterate that I believe there are enough commonalities within each group, western and indigenous, to be able to discuss their worldviews in general terms. The following discussion will outline some of those characteristics.

Indigenous knowledge systems are based on a worldview which is holistic, rather than reductionist as in the predominant western perspective. Indigenous peoples from even widely separated cultures generally see the universe as a single, related, living, spiritual entity. All elements of creation are thought to have life, power and will and are, therefore, equally essential in the scheme of things and equally deserving of respect. The indigenous worldview is subjective rather than objective. If all are continuously interacting integral parts of a whole, then objectivity is a logical impossibility. The indigenous worldview is experiential rather than positivist in that humans commonly have experiences which cannot be measured positivistically but are no less real. Dreams, visions, the spiritual, communications from non-human entities are all accepted parts of indigenous reality. Obviously, such distinct ways of seeing reality will result in very different ways of approaching the creation of knowledge.

In indigenous societies experiential knowledge is often considered the most valuable kind. In some cultures children are rarely overtly taught, rarely told what to do or how to do it (Cajete 1994:34; Goulet 1998:27; Kawagley 1995:24). Instead, they are expected to learn by example, by watching and doing, even if the lessons are slow and painful at times. It is believed that only by actually figuring out how to do something logically, step-by-step can one come to a true understanding of the principles of the activity. In indigenous societies, experiences of any nature are thought to be meaningful. Dreams contain valuable information which should not be ignored. Unusual behaviour in animals should not be regarded as anomalous and ignored. The concept of "anomalous" may not even exist in many indigenous conceptual schemes. There is rarely a distinction made between the knowable and the unknowable as in the western conception of the paranormal - that which is either unknowable with the current state of scientific knowledge or that which is not real. The most common exception to this in indigenous systems of thought would be that which is so powerful in a spiritual sense as to be unknowable, inconceivable by those with so much less power. The Lakota concept of the Great Mystery would be an example of this.

In indigenous societies the experiential knowledge collected by every person is valued. Hunters go out on to the land where they see the numbers of animals, their condition, the condition of their habitat and food sources, predator-prey interaction and so on. They return to the community and share their knowledge with other community members thereby building the body of knowledge. Knowledge generation is not considered to be the exclusive domain of experts. Of course, some individuals are seen as "experts" on certain topics, this is especially so of the shaman, but other culture members may be considered to be experts on history, genealogy, hunting knowledge, fishing knowledge, *et cetera*.

One method by which indigenous knowledge has been perpetuated is through oral tradition. Oral tradition is a method of storing and transmitting knowledge. The processes of gathering, storing and transmitting knowledge are not seen as discrete in indigenous societies. Knowledge gained experientially is continually added to the body of oral tradition and new information is considered in light of what is already stored in the body of oral tradition.

In indigenous societies, learning is seen as a continual process which carries on throughout life. Knowledge is passed on orally from one generation to the next and between culture members of the same generation with different experiences. Each individual contributes to the societal body of knowledge by adding his or her experiential knowledge to the oral record. This is how the oral historical record of the peoples of the northern Northwest Coast has been constructed and continues to be constructed. Important events continue to be added to the *adaa'ox*. Events which I have witnessed which are becoming part of the *adaa'ox* include the various incidents in the "Fish Wars" (conflicts between the Gitxsan and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans), various disputes with forest companies, and the Delgamuukw land claim case. These events are told over and over in the community becoming part of the oral historical record.

Today, of course, most Gitxsan are literate in English (some in Gitxsanimx as well). Many of their stories, oral histories and other kinds of stories, have been recorded in written form by non-community members. In recent years, the Gitxsan, as organizations, families and individuals, have been recording their knowledge in permanent forms. Many elders have expressed a desire to record their knowledge in forms which will be available in the future since they are well aware that the process of oral transmission of knowledge has declined. Many families and individuals have notebooks, audio and video recordings of older family members transmitting their knowledge. Gitxsan educational and political organizations have also set out to record, collect, organize and make available this information. The Gitxsan have an extensive library in Hazelton. The information gathered there is shared according to traditional Gitxsan rules for information sharing. Some is public information available to anyone, some is accessible only to members of the house which owns the information.

Some Gitxsan lament the decline in the oral transmission of cultural knowledge. They see recording of it in permanent forms as necessary but are aware that it changes the nature of the knowledge in several ways. A permanent record is not as easily added to or adapted for changing circumstances or varying audiences. Young people are losing the skill of memorization. And the fact of being forced to resort to these methods of transmitting cultural knowledge signals a sad and significant change in Gitxsan society in that young people are not spending the time with older people needed for the traditional method of knowledge transmission.

Western Recognition of Indigenous Knowledge

Although I feel it is safe to say there is no wide-spread recognition among western scholars of the value or indigenous knowledge, in recent years some members of the western academic community have come to realize that indigenous methods of generating knowledge can be effective in spite of the differences between western and indigenous knowledge foundations. They have come to understand that indigenous knowledge combines practical knowledge necessary for living in the world with the ideology needed to apply that knowledge in a sustainable way for the reproduction of the society. A body of scholarly literature has arisen from that understanding. Much of that scholarly literature falls within the realm of what has come to be known as traditional environmental knowledge. Although this literature deals primarily with environmental topics, through study of this area, some western scholars have come to understand indigenous methods of generating knowledge and the holistic nature of indigenous knowledge which warrants discussion in this thesis. The recording of this body of knowledge, primarily by anthropologists and biologists, has required intimate co-operation between indigenous people and scholars.

Some of the most significant academic studies of indigenous environmental knowledge have been generated in northern North America. I suspect that western scholars who may have thought of themselves as knowledgeable individuals before venturing into the northern environment may frequently have been humbled by the experience of what was to them a hostile environment. At the same time, as their very survival often depended upon the knowledge of their indigenous hosts, they may have quickly come to realized the efficacy of indigenous knowledge. Scholars sitting comfortably in their southern universities may find it rather easier to contend that indigenous knowledge is inefficacious. I will briefly outline the work of some of those scholars whose studies of indigenous knowledge is expanding western awareness of the validity of traditional knowledge.

A pioneering study of indigenous traditional knowledge is Milton Freeman's *Inuit Land Use and Occupancy Study* (1976a, 1976b, 1976c). This study was based on the premise that Inuit could provide scientifically sound information about their environment. In another work, Freeman points out (1986:30) that although the worldview of the Inuit is different from that of scientists, the Inuit are no less able to produce accurate information based on careful observation. In a number of studies (Freeman 1985, 1988a, 1989) Freeman provides examples where indigenous knowledge was found to be more accurate than scientific knowledge. This may be because of the holistic approach of indigenous ways of knowing versus the reductionist methods of science which result in "the inherent limitations of science to produce definitive answers to complex problems" (Freeman 1989:96). In a reductionist approach synergistic effects cannot easily be accounted for. While anthropologists have long subscribed to the principle of cultural relativism whereby cultures are not judged by the standards of other cultures, that principle is often forgotten when western science claims universality. As Freeman reminds us, it is important "that scientists in particular remember that their scientific culture is not shared by everyone" (Freeman 1986:29). He comments on a Eurocentric scientific view of the world saying, "those who do not subscribe to the scientist's definition of the problem are held to be somewhat lacking in their understanding of reality" (Freeman 1986:30) and that scientists are trapped within their own cultural biases as are other people (1986:30). Freeman contends that science has limitations which its practitioners can be unaware of or unwilling to admit and that there can be considerable lack of objectivity in scientific research (Freeman 1989). Freeman goes on to say, "The fact is, of course, that some societies base their own understanding of how the world works on quite different theories and approaches to knowing" (1986:30). Freeman contends that knowledge systems which are not based on the principles of western science may be no less efficacious, nonetheless.

Usher (1986) seems to agree with Freeman's position that scientists are usually unaware of the cultural biases which underlie their scientific thinking. He contends that they are often unaware that their scientific reasoning contains assumptions which are scientifically unexamined such as western concepts of property and individual motivation. As a result of their modes of thought scientists are not able to understand indigenous systems or even to recognize their existence.

Another early study of indigenous knowledge was that of Adrian Tanner (1979) who demonstrated that the Mistassini Cree knowledge system was effective, not only because of its technical knowledge, but because of the ideological system in which the technology was utilized. Richard Nelson (1983), in his study of the Koyukon, made a similar point to that made by Tanner in that he established the essential role that spirituality had to play in the ideology that made a sustainable way of life possible for the Koyukon. Eugene Hunn (1988) makes the point that indigenous knowledge systems can provide insight which science may not be able to and that ecological or other types of indigenous knowledge cannot be separated from the entire knowledge system. Berkes (1988) claims that, in the Cree system, knowledge cannot be divorced from values. Feit contends that although indigenous knowledge systems produce knowledge no less functional than that of western knowledge systems, they are suppressed in the circumpolar north because of the unequal power situations in which indigenous people find themselves (1988). Mailhot (1993) contends that indigenous knowledge systems are not only more holistic than western systems but can be more precise as well. Martha Johnson (1992) maintains, that in a climate where the foundations of western science are beginning to be questioned, the integration of indigenous and western knowledge can benefit both societies. She says (1992:9), " Over the past 20 years, the fundamental tenets of western science - rational, analytical thinking, objectivity, reductionism, and the Judeo-Christian ethic of human domination over nature - have been challenged for being ethnocentric, antiecological, and ignorant of the cultural dimension of technological development." She contends that indigenous knowledge may be able to address some of these issues.

James Waldram makes the claim that traditional knowledge systems can be "equally historical and scientific as that of Western science and history" (1986:115-116) but that it is often difficult for indigenous people to express their understandings in terms which are readily understandable to other Canadians (1986:115). One way in which indigenous knowledge systems differ from western systems, according to Waldram, is while western systems are paradigmatic, traditional knowledge systems are "cybernetic." In such systems, information is received, processed, interpreted, stored, acted upon and shared in a constant loop. Traditional knowledge systems are open to including all kinds of new information, rather than considering facts which do not fit into the existing paradigm as anomalous. The process of creating knowledge is incremental rather than proceeding through a series of revolutions as Kuhn described the western scientific process (1964:6).

Waldram (1986:117-8) discusses the issue of whether traditional knowledge is scientific. He concludes that traditional knowledge correlates with scientific knowledge on a number of points including: traditional knowledge systems are involved in the process of discovery and verification; the knowledge is reliable since it has ensured group survival; observations are made by direct observation, often by many individuals over a long period time, and are therefore empirical; the development of concepts and explanatory frameworks are made explicit during the communication of knowledge; and they are capable of prediction. Waldram concludes that traditional knowledge systems are "inherently scientific." He goes on to say (1986:123), "In certain areas, such knowledge may be even more scientific since it is the product of a much longer process of inquiry by people directly dependent upon the accurateness of such knowledge for their cultural and physical survival." Waldram makes the point well that traditional knowledge is scientific, but leaves unanswered the question of whether traditional knowledge should be put to the test of scientific standards of whether it should be accepted as having its own methods of creating knowledge.

In his discussion of the historical validity of oral history, Waldram contends (1986:118) that indigenous people have been considered by westerners people to be without a historical tradition. He contends, quoting Littlejohn, that history recorded orally is as valid a source of historical information about indigenous peoples as is the history recorded by the dominant culture because all history, whether passed from hand to hand or mouth to mouth, is subjective (Waldram 1986:119).

Each of these scholars has broadened the academic community's understanding of indigenous knowledge systems. Because their work opens a window between western scholarship and indigenous knowledge I consider it a constructive contribution to academia's appreciation of the value of indigenous knowledge. Although the subject matter is different from that of major concern to this paper, oral history, I believe discussion of this literature is relevant because it either directly or indirectly considers the efficacy of indigenous knowledge, underlying worldviews, ethical issues relevant to the discussion and the holistic approach necessary to understand indigenous knowledge.

There are a number of bodies of western theory which have arisen recently to challenge the prevailing science-dominated models. I will now briefly discuss some of these, their relationships and proponents. Before I begin I must acknowledge the contribution of Stanley Barrett's text (1996) to the following discussion of anthropological theory. Although I have read many of the original sources and the works of other commentators on the various schools of thought discussed, Barrett's work is clear, concise and I relied upon it to a considerable degree.

Critical Theory, Postmodernism, Postcolonialism

Relationships between the various schools of thought in anthropology and other bodies of social theory are complex. The critical theory of the Frankfurt School arose in the

1930s with Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno as it's leading proponents. Critical theory is a precursor to poststructualist and postmodern thought which arose in 1960s. Critical theory and postmodernism are intellectual movements rather than specific theories and within these movements are a number of bodies of theory.

Critical Theory

Critical theory challenges the notion that the paradigm of the natural sciences can be applied to the social and human realms (Barrett 1996:141). Critical theorists contend that the social aspects of existence cannot be analyzed rationally because they are not rational. These theorists criticize the notion of scientific objectivity in the study of humanity as an immoral position. They are committed to the improvement of the human condition.

One body of critical theory which emerged in the 1960s arose in response to structuralism. Structuralism was a body of theory which was influential in anthropology and other disciplines in the 1960s and 1970s. The structuralists, with Claude Levi-Strausss as their leading proponent, questioned the possibility of a positivistic, scientific study of culture. They contended that human behaviour was engendered by deep structures and underlying principles rather than the surface structures of empirical, observable behaviour (Barrett 1997:142). Structuralists argued that human culture was formed by a systematic set or pattern of relationships which could often be expressed as binary opposites.

Theorists who came to be known as poststructuralists or deconstructionists criticized structuralism. Michel Foucault critiqued structuralism for being ahistorical and universalizing rather than portraying knowledges and the societies structured upon them as the products of historical processes (Foucault 1966, 1972). Pierre Bourdieu contended that structuralism presented a delineation of culture which was too synchronic and static and advocated for a more reflexive study of society which sets aside theoretical oppositions such as culture and society, subjective and objective (1977, 1990). Jacques Derrida criticized structuralism for being too definitive, in that it is not possible to be certain that a symbol or sign representing meaning correlates exactly with the intended meaning (1973).

Soon after the formation of poststrucutralist and deconstructionist theories, came the erudition of postmodernist theories. This body of theory presents a broad critique of European philosophy and science. These theorists assert that the principles underlying European philosophy and science, which have been held to be universally true, are, in fact, cultural constructions (Tyler 1986:123). Further, they contend that these constructions facilitate the domination of the Other by members of dominant social groups (Barrett 1996:151). Postmodernists dismiss the idea of universal truths.

The postmodernists have allied themselves with other critical theorists, including those espousing postcolonial and feminist critiques. Feminist theory will be dicussed briefly, then I will return to more detailed discussion of postmodernism and postcolonialism.

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory as developed since the 1980s has presented a challenge to western science and the western practice of research. This body of thought generally contends that western thought is shaped by assumptions of male domination (Warren 1988:10) and that belief in the objectivity and value neutral nature of scientific inquiry is false (Whittaker 1994). These ideas challenge the epistemological foundations of western scientific thinking, but feminist theory has been challenged by indigenous women and other women of colour. Indigenous women often contend that feminist theory contains assumptions derived from the experience of white, western, middle-class women which are not shared by indigenous women (Collins 1991: 37; Smith 1999:166). In spite of these critiques, feminist theory is quite widely heard and helps to open up the possibility of challenging the dominant ideology.

Postmodernism

Being familiar with indigenous ways of understanding the world, I found it encouraging to read the works of postmodernist theorists. Many of their ideas paralleled my own. Postmodernism is a dialogue initiated by western theorists which, in my opinion, represents a step closer to indigenous views of scholarship. It is an attempt to think outside the predominant western rationalist paradigm. It allows that other ways of viewing reality may be possible, unlike the positivist tradition which tries to explain all phenomena within its framework and dismisses the unexplainable as unreal. Like feminism, postmodernism is concerned with the issue of representation.

By the 1960s, the old colonial empires appeared to be crumbling, although, I would say, they were actually retrenching in a different more subtle and powerful form called economic globalization. The apparent decline of colonial empire caused a crisis in anthropology. Indigenous peoples were becoming aware that their knowledge was a valuable commodity to western scholars and began to demand that research in their communities be useful and relevant to them. "Pure research" which did not benefit the communities from which it came was no longer considered acceptable (Deloria 1969). Some indigenous peoples complained that the extraction of indigenous knowledge by rich and powerful western academics from poor disenfranchised communities was a gift from the poor to the rich (Deloria 1969:97). As a result of these indigenous concerns about the lack of relevance or practicality in research, a body of literature focused on "development" emerged which sought to address the “Indian problem.” It was in such a milieu that radical changes in anthropological theory evolved.

Throughout much of its history, dominant schools of anthropological thought have devoted themselves to creating a science of culture although the goal was elusive because of the complexity of culture, inconsistency of human behaviour and the difficulty of applying scientific methods to the study of culture. Some anthropological theorists began to question the possibility of a science of culture (Barrett 1996:150-151). The move in that direction may have begun with Levi-Straussss, who, although he proclaimed to be involved in scientific investigation, contended that his version was not positivistic.

Postmodern theorists took this idea a step further, contending that a science of culture was impossible, not because of methodological problems, but for epistemological reasons (Barrett 1996:150-151). Since the origin of their discipline, anthropologists with positivist orientations had assumed that it was possible to understand other cultures. They also assumed that it was possible to interpret and describe those cultures accurately. Theorizing consisted of attempts by western scholars to explain cultures more accurately than culture members were able. This was assumed to be possible because of the scientist's superior scientific education and the fact that an outsider is objective and, therefore, more accurate in his or her observations and interpretations. Further, anthropologists generally assumed they had the right to study other cultures and even contended, at times, that their studies were beneficial to those cultures.

The postmodernists objected to this view of scientific superiority and also claimed that attempts to study cultures scientifically were unethical. The postmodernists contended that, far from being objective, research in other cultures had political implications. Anthropological research had primarily been an activity undertaken by privileged members of first world nations among the peoples of the third and fourth worlds. In this undertaking, those being researched were dehumanized as objects of scientific study and were represented, or misrepresented, by the authors of anthropological works as they saw fit. Those being misrepresented were often not even aware of that misrepresentation and, even if they were aware of it, they did not have the power to do anything about it. Postmodernists contend that such relationships between powerful representatives of western society and powerless research subjects serves to reinforce western hegemony (Barrett 1996:151).

The postmodernists challenge the authority of anthropologists to speak for other cultures. They contend that this assumption has arisen from the imbalance of power between the West and those traditionally studied by anthropologists resulting from colonial relations. This assumption has been reinforced by the supposition that science is the only, or at least, the superior way to create knowledge.

When cultures come into contact, different viewpoints are expressed. According to Helmut Wautischer (1998:3), an increased acceptance of a multiplicity of viewpoints has arisen from postmodern thought. He says that postmodernists have attempted to employ creative strategies of solving the conceptual disjunctions which arise when conflicting claims for truth originate from disparate methodological and historical origins. Wautischer claims (1998:3) that new scientific methodologies could arise from such debate. And new scientific methodologies may be needed because "our twentieth century sense of science is incomplete: objectifying methodologies cannot account for qualitative experiences" (Wautischer 1998:4).

The postmodernists are concerned with the issue of representation in anthropological writings. It is their contention that only the voice of the anthropologist has been heard and that ways should be found to present the voice of those being represented. Postmodernists use the term "polyvocal" to indicate that a number of voices should be heard in cultural representations. Postmodernists have also coined the term "dialogical" to indicate that research should be a process which involves an intensive dialogue between the anthropologist and those he studies. From this dialogue the anthropologist is supposed to derive understanding (Marcus 1998).

The postmodernist focus on ethnographies as texts (Geertz 1988) which cannot represent absolute reality and, therefore, which are fictional in some way, has opened up ethnographic writing to techniques of literary critique (Barrett 1996:152). This kind of consideration has resulted in experimentation among some anthropologists with various genres in their writing (Barrett 1996:152). It has also led some postmodernists to question the nature and validity of academic writing. Jurgen W. Kremer (1998:3) discusses what I call cognitive imperialism in the academic writing process. He says,

> Imperialism and colonialism come in all shapes and sizes. Their most insidious appearance may be in the thought forms seductively and addictively provided by the forces of domination. The act of editing lends itself rather easily to such acts of complicity, whether in the form of the *Chicago Manual of Style* or other conventions of the English language. Correct English may be a violation of indigenous presence.

The postmodernists have moved anthropology away from a focus on structure and causality towards meaning and interpretation (Barrett 1996:152-153). They see culture as a system of symbols akin to a language. They speak of texts, by which they refer to anything within a culture which has meaning and which can be interpreted, such as the oral histories which are the subject of this study. According to Barrett (1996:153), the task of the anthropologist is to combine with "the native" and interpret texts. They do this by means of hermeneutics, a process of re-reading and rethinking which supposedly allows the anthropologist to understand how culture members decipher texts in their own cultures. Another method utilized by postmodernists to understand texts is deconstruction. Deconstruction involves breaking down cultural concepts to reveal their underlying ideological attributes (Barrett 1996:153).

The focus on understanding the particulars of a culture by means of deep or "thick" (Geertz 1973; Marcus 1998) descriptions of that culture through "radical participation"

(Goulet 1998) moves anthropology away from its former goals of generalization, cross-cultural comparison and the development of grand theory (Barrett 1996:153). Positivistic models which explain and predict much are seen as unattainable by the postmodernists. Such models which promote the notion of societies which are orderly and predictable provide support for the dominant ideology and western hegemony according to postmodernist thought. Instead, they renew emphasis on relativism much like the historical particularists of the early years of the anthropological discipline (Barrett 1996:153).

Postmodernist thought was also proceeded by the body of literature on underdevelopment and the hinterland-metropolis theory lead by Andre Gunder Frank (1967, 1969, 1977) and others (Magdoff 1978, Wallerstein 1979). This theory which stressed the globalization of even the most apparently remote peoples by their inclusion into the world capitalist economic system may have contributed to ideas presented by Marcus and Fischer (1986:43). They contend that the notion of cultures which are insular and distinct from others outmoded. Related to this discussion is the postmodernist critique of standard western versions of history in which it is allowed that there can be multiple discourses about the past by those who had different roles in events.

Ironically, in the plea for better representation by the studied, the postmodernists have developed a jargon which makes their writing even more exclusive and inaccessible to those being represented. This, it can be argued, reinforces the hierarchical distinctions between the western anthropologist and those being represented.

While the goal of the postmodernists is to give voice to those upon whom the study centres, it can be argued that it is not possible for the anthropological writer to relinquish all authority in his writing. The author selects the information which is presented in his work, the style in which it is written and the organization of the material.

There are a number of reasons to question the possibility of the author relinquishing voice that originate both inside the anthropologist's own culture and within the cultures he studies. The question arises, if the anthropologist relinquishes his voice, how will that affect his academic career? Publishers and university promotion and tenure committees give credit only to those anthropologists who present their own voice. University departments continue to debate whether anthropologists should be given academic credit for works created on behalf of aboriginal communities precisely because the voice is too much the community's and not enough the anthropologist's. An even more pertinent question is, how is it possible for the anthropologist to relinquish his voice? How is the anthropological writer to decide the degree to which he relinquishes his voice and how is he to judge when this has been accomplished? Rabinow (1986:244) comments on the work of James Clifford, arguing that far from relinquishing authority, Clifford makes a powerful plea for his own authority by insisting on dialogue. Rabinow argues that supposedly dialogical postmodernist texts can be just as constructed as those texts which are explicitly monological. Rabinow may be overemphasizing the point, though, because Clifford maintains (1983:140) that the goal of plural voices is utopian. He contends only that dialogue should be a goal of ethnographic writing.

Because postmodernism questions the ethics and epistomological soundness of anthropological research, some commentators have suggested that it may produce a move away from fieldwork towards inward-looking self-criticism (Spencer 1989:161). Barrett (1996:161) counters in his contention that postmodernism's heightened awareness of "the other," and its critique of positivist, colonial anthropology indicates that is not likely to occur.

According to Barrett (1996:161), postmodernism has been criticized for having no standards - "that one cultural account is as good as any other." This criticism has been rejected by Clifford (1986:6) who says that good ethnographies can be considered "true fictions." I would say the ultimate test of a "good" ethnography is when culture members recognize themselves and do not find the representation of themselves erroneous. Barrett presents what I believe is a realistic assessment of what a postmodern study of a culture can reasonably accomplish. He says (1996:162), "what postmodernists seem to be advocating is a means of communicating cross-culturally that will actually work in a world where the authoritative voice of the ethnographer has lost its clout."

Postmodernism and other critical approaches to the study of culture have made valuable contributions toward promoting understanding within the discipline of anthropology of the difficulties of fairly or accurately representing Others, although, I would suggest, they do not go far enough. Indigenous theorists attempt to build on the critical approach as Churchill does in his "indigenist" approach which privileges indigenous knowledge and the rights of indigenous peoples (Churchill 1992b) and as I am attempting to do in this thesis.

In the following section, in a discussion of postcolonialism, I will discuss my concerns about the failure of postmodernist theories to adequately reflect indigenous interests.

Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism is an aspect of postmodern theory, yet it is a concept that seems to obscure the western ideological hegemony that results in indigenous scholars having to argue that our worldview and ways of knowing have validity.

When I first heard the term "postcolonialism" I was jarred by the concept. I have since read works by several other indigenous scholars who had the same reaction (Battiste and Henderson 2000:2; Duran, *et al*, 1998: 70; Yazzie 1998:46). Colonization has not ended so the term made little sense. Although many former colonies have become politically independent from their former rulers, the legacy of that colonial rule will take a very long time to overcome. Tribal boundaries were redrawn creating on-going conflicts all around the world. Colonial attitudes and forms of government and society were instituted which remain in place. In the Americas, Australia, New Zealand, and other colonies, the colonizers have yet to leave or relinquish control. Everywhere, in former colonies, the colonization of the mind remains. The lands, economies, institutions, histories, languages, values, spiritualities, technologies, knowledges, and other aspects of indigenous life remain colonized. Ideological colonization, of course, is the most effective tool of colonization. With minds well colonized, physical coercion is unnecessary. It seemed to me that to create a concept such as "postcolonialism" was another form of colonial ideological control, an attempt to convince both the colonizers and the colonized that colonialism was a thing of the past since European colonial governments withdrew from some countries and other colonies gained "independence" by creating governments of their own. From the perspective of indigenous peoples, none of this means an end to colonization. I am not alone in my thinking in this regard. According to Linda Smith,

> Many indigenous intellectuals actively resist participation in any discussion within the discourses of post-coloniality. This is because post-colonialism is viewed as the convenient invention of Western intellectuals which reinscribes their power to define the world (1999:14).

Few indigenous people are aware of the term, "postcolonialism," since it is found in the realm of academic jargon, a language usually denied to them by colonialism. Those who are aware of the term often have a hard time with it because the concept of "postcolonialism" is misleading since there is nothing "post" about colonialism according to Maori scholar, Roger Maaka (pers. com.). Aborigine activist Bobbi Sykes put it this way, "What? Post-colonialism? Have they left?" (quoted in Smith 1999:24).

Of course, many who use the term "postcolonialism" have never intended it to mean that colonialism as a form of government or as an ideology has ended. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, the authors of *The Empire Writes Back* (a widely read discussion of postcolonial theory) use the term to refer to "all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" (1989:2). While primarily a theory of literature, the type of literature included in postcolonial theory is not restricted and can include literature within anthropology and other fields in which indigenous peoples are represented. Literature can fall under the rubric of postcoloniality, according to Ashcroft *et al.* as long as it emerged "out of the experience of colonization" (1989:2). I believe this body of literature contributes valuable understandings to the relationship between colonizer and colonized. One of these understandings is the revelation of the power of empire to construct "privileging norms" which remain central to the prevailing ideology even when the official colonial period ends. Another is that, "European theories....emerge from particular cultural traditions which are hidden by false notions of 'the universal' (Ashcroft *et al.*1989:11).

In spite of advancing ideas like the above mentioned which could contribute to improved relationships between colonizers and colonized, there are still some glaring flaws in the understandings being generated by this body of theory, primary among them being the continuing invisibility of colonized indigenous peoples. In *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft *et al.* list a number of nations producing postcolonial literature including Canada, the United States, India, Australia and New Zealand, then they say of these "Since all the post-colonial societies we discuss have achieved political independence, why is the issue of coloniality still relevant at all?" (1989:6). From the perspective of the colonized indigenous peoples of these nations, very little if any decolonization has occurred. Nor is it likely to soon if the colonizers do not even recognize themselves as such as is indicated by the statement made by Ashcroft, *et al.* regarding the achievement of political independence by Canada and several other settler colonies. The story of the achievement of independence by the settlers from their originating country becomes the predominant one, and the story of the continuing colonization of the indigenous peoples within those nations is silenced.

Ama Ata Aidoo mirrors the comments of Ashcroft and his colleagues regarding postcoloniality, saying,

> Perhaps the concept was relevant to the United States after its wars of independence, and to a certain extent to the erstwhile imperial dominions of Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Applied to Africa, India, and some other parts of the world, 'post-colonial' is not only a fiction, but a most pernicious fiction, a cover-up of a dangerous period in our people's lives.

That Aidoo is unable to see the colonization of the indigenous peoples of North America, Australia and New Zealand, indicates the completeness of their colonization and the power of the concept of postcolonialism. Battiste and Henderson emphasize the point saying, "We are the unofficially colonized peoples of the world" (2000:2).

Another commentator on the issue of postcolonialism, Deepika Bahri, contends that Canada and Australia are often omitted from such discussions because of the "absence of problems of racism or of the imposition of a foreign language" (1:2001). Does Bahri really think that there is no racism in Canada and Australia and that the indigenous peoples of these two countries spoke English before the colonizers arrived? That he would make such a statement indicates the obfuscating power of colonial ideology.

Some indigenous scholars have appropriated the concept of postcolonialism to assist in envisioning the possibility of a new order in which indigenous peoples are liberated from all manifestations of colonial control (Battiste and Henderson 2000:3). Mi'kmaq scholar, Marie Battiste says, "Indigenous thinkers use the term 'postcolonial' to describe a symbolic strategy for shaping a desirable future, not for an existing reality"

(1998:xix) and Navajo scholar, Robert Yazzie, claims, "Postcolonialism will not arrive for Indigenous peoples until they are allowed to make their own decisions" (1998:46). But it is clear that such a possibility is far from being realized. Colonization of indigenous peoples is so complete as to render them invisible to some of those who comment on the concept of postcolonialism.

Native American psychologists, Duran, Duran and Brave Heart, have utilized the concept of postcoloniality to further an indigenous agenda; they use the concept in their healing work. They state, "By 'postcolonial' thought we mean a critical orientation to scholarship and practice that, first, recognizes a social criticism of the unequal process of representation by which the historical experience of the once colonized became framed by the colonizers and, second, incorporated the subjected knowledge of marginalized groups in developing posttraditional methods" (1998:70). This is necessary, they contend, because western behavioural theories have decontextualized and individualized social problems (Duran, *et al.* 1998:68). These theories are hegemonic, "they partake in ideological/cultural domination by the assertion of universality and neutrality and by the disavowal of all other cultural forms or interpretations" (Duran, *et al.* 1998:68).

Use of the concept of postcolonialism in discussions about indigenous peoples can be both useful and dangerous. When the concept implies that indigenous peoples are no longer colonized, the concept neatly serves the colonizer. When the concept is employed in a discussion about a not yet achieved, but desired outcome for indigenous peoples, it can be valuable.

Indigenous Critique of Postpositivist Approaches

Those bodies of theory which reject a positivist approach - feminist theory, critical theory and poststructuralist theory - have begun a movement away from the notion of positivism as the one true way of comprehending reality. Yet, they are all devised by western academics guided by a western worldview. Linda Smith contends that indigenous approaches are still absent from these bodies of thought and rejected by them. She says, "the possibility that approaches can be generated from very different value systems and world views are denied even within the emancipatory paradigm of 'postpositivism' " (Smith 1999:167).

While it has been argued that postmodernism is an academic exercise in self-aggrandizement (Singer 1993:23; Sangren 1988:409), I would contend, from the perspective of an indigenous scholar, that it has had real value in improving the unequal relationships of power between researchers and those who are the subject of study. Whether western scholars came to this realization on their own, or whether the change in attitude which has accompanied the development of postmodernist theory is a result of demands by indigenous and other oppressed peoples under study, can be debated.

Regardless, the outcome is that anthropologists are relinquishing their authority to represent cultures as they deem appropriate and are relinquishing the belief in the unquestioned authority of the scientific perspective. This has opened up whole new worlds of possibility for research. It can result in works by western scholars which much more accurately portray indigenous societies as indigenous people see them. And, to me, this is the crux of the matter.

Westerners have represented their societies as they saw fit, creating their own mythologies of the conquest and continued occupation of the indigenous world which have gone unquestioned until recently. The postmodernist perspective on the scientific worldview and the issue of representation have opened up avenues for questioning those mythologies within western academia. Indigenous peoples have always questioned those mythologies and now, considerable numbers of western scholars are questioning them as well. Postmodernist theory may not go far enough in its analysis of indigenous-western power relations in the opinion of many indigenous scholars but, I believe, that few would not see it as movement towards that goal. At the same time, indigenous scholars might warn postmodernists not to be too positive about the crumbling of the metanarratives of the West (Trouillot 1991:20).

It could be argued that the emphasis on the deep meaning of a "text" within postmodernism could lead to the neglect of the larger issues of colonial relations such as the structural poverty and inequality suffered by indigenous communities. While this may be true, the postmodernist approach does ask questions of colonial relations which were rarely asked before, particularly, those regarding the relationship between the researched and the researcher.

While there are certainly problems with attaining the goals postmodernism sets for itself, I believe it is a positive move toward the recognition of the issue of representation and the question of the power relationships between those being represented and those doing the representing. I believe that the postmodernist discourse is more than "academic sport" (Singer 1993:23) or strictly part of an academic powerplay (Sangren 1988:409). I see it as a movement toward the goal of narrowing the gap in power between the represented and the representing.

Chapter 3

Methodology: Issues in Indigenous Research Methodology

According to Sandra Harding, research methodology is a theory of how research should proceed while research methods are techniques for gathering evidence (1987:2-3). Indigenous and western perspectives on methodology can vary considerably in that each begins with different assumptions, each has different objectives in undertaking research, each considers different research questions legitimate and each considers different approaches appropriate. Anyon *et al.* emphasize this point regarding archaeological research methods and their distinctiveness from oral historical methods:

> Good scientific research proceeds using a methodology based on the falsification of hypotheses. The whole is broken down into analytically meaningful parts, which are then qualitatively reconstituted in ways that provide meaning to the archaeological record. In essence, archaeologists disprove what they can and then try to explain the residual hypotheses. This scientific methodology may not be appropriate for the research of oral traditions, where more humanistic, holistic, and qualitative approaches are sometimes warranted. Applying a humanistic rather than a scientific methodology in the use of oral traditions should be done in a manner that meets high scholarly standards while maintaining the integrity and context of the subject matter (1997:77).

Research is by definition a western enterprise, therefore, indigenous researchers are often aware of and uncomfortable with the fact that developing "indigenous" research methodologies involves a process of negotiation and accommodation. There can be no such thing as truly "indigenous research" because the concept of research is a western one. Indigenous knowledge was traditionally acquired in the community from other community members throughout one's lifetime as one went about life day to day. In the colonial situation in which indigenous people find themselves today, adaptation has become necessary. One of these adaptations is in knowledge gathering. Through this process of accommodation and adaptation "indigenous" research methodology develops. I expect that most indigenous researchers are aware of the contradiction in what they do. I worry about these issues and frequently seek reassurance from community members who usually say that the need for creating new knowledge for the community is greater than the need to be entirely true to indigenous concepts of knowledge creation and transmission. I am especially concerned that my research may be perceived as exploitative which it will be, in my opinion, to at least some degree. In undertaking research in an indigenous community I am taking the valuable commodity of knowledge, making a living from it and returning little. I feel I must be continually vigilant so as not to overstep acceptability but I am also aware that I will not be able to satisfy everyone. Some community members are committed to the gathering of accurate information to meet the needs of their community, others see all research as exploitative. I try to maintain a balance. One way I try to do this is by indigenizing my work.

Indigenizing Research

Although I held the concept for some before, the first time I encountered the terminology "indigenizing" was in the writings of Ward Churchill (1992b). Churchill said an "indigenist" is one who takes the rights of indigenous people as his highest political priority and who draws upon the knowledge and values of indigenous societies. Australian aboriginal scholar, Lester Irabina Rigney, told me he indigenizes his research by privileging indigenous voices (pers. com). As mentioned earlier, Maori scholar, Linda Smith, makes another important point about "indigenizing" research in her discussion of *Kanohi kitea,* the "seen face." For the researcher, this translates into participating in community events in order to build and maintain credibility (Smith 1999:15). This approach in which the rights of indigenous people take priority and in which the indigenous voice is privileged informs my work.

In indigenous communities, individuals are not separated from their roles as in the western concept of "professionalism" and individuals are always seen as members of a group. These ways of considering people and their roles were both obvious when I lived and worked in Gitxsan country. When I undertook research with people from distant villages who did not know me, they wanted to know who I was (in other words to whom am I related, what house and clan do I belong to and what village do I come from) before they answered my questions. When it became known that I was undertaking genealogical research, people would come to me at home or when they saw me in the community either to give me genealogical information or to get genealogical information from me. Genealogist became part of who I am, not just my work to be conducted during office hours exclusively. In western society people are more likely to be seen as individuals rather than as members of a group so their role and position may be unclear to indigenous people; they cannot be situated. Indigenous people often find this disorienting. In indigenous societies people commonly relate to each other in kinship terms. Indigenous societies are smaller in scale, role differentiation is more limited and interaction is more frequent and personal. Each individual has probably known the other members of the community all of his or her life. The person and his kin relationship are primary, roles are secondary, whereas in western societies no kin relationship would be expected, personality and life history would be unknown and role would be primary.

The kind of relationship dictated by the western expectation of proper research-informant roles is often considered inappropriate in indigenous communities. Of course, many indigenous people in North America are familiar with western expectations and, more particularly, with the researcher-informant relationship. That does not make the roles expected by the western researcher acceptable, only tolerated. On more than one occasion I have heard of elders becoming exasperated with the inappropriate behaviour of researchers and others asking cultural questions. In an effort to regularize the relationship, many elders demand to know who the researcher is. Elders often do not want to know who the researcher works for, what degrees he has and the nature of the research project; elders do want to know where the researcher's home is, his cultural background, who his family is and so on. Elders usually want to be provided with the information to be able to judge the person. If the person is deemed trustworthy, then his projects should be as well. The problem is that researchers often have an expectation that they can go into the community, quickly seek out the appropriate people to provide them with the information they need, do quick interviews and get back to the office in time for the next semester's classes and in time for the reporting deadline for the funder. This does not fit in well with the expectations of elders who would probably prefer to know a researcher for several years, interacting in many community situations. Then, after the researcher's level of understanding grows, he can be trusted with important knowledge. The expectations and realities of many researchers and elders may be very different indeed. Researchers who are community members usually have an advantage over outside researchers in regard to this issue.

Facing Methodological and Ethical Research Issues

Although this thesis has taken entirely too long to complete, I know now that the time was valuable because of what I have learned during that time. During the many years I worked as a researcher for the Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en and on several other projects since undertaken for other peoples, many methodological and ethical issues faced in my thesis did not present themselves. When research projects are initiated by a community, many of the difficulties faced in projects initiated by a researcher are avoided. In a community-initiated study, there is likely to be less suspicion on the part of those being interviewed about the motives of the researcher, the objective of the study and the value of the study for the community. During this study I have become aware of ethical and methodological issues invoked by it.

Foremost among the ethical issues I have had to face during the course of this research is the issue of the exploitative nature of research. Research nearly always benefits the researcher far more than those being researched. Research can, at times, result in harm to those being researched, as when information gathered is used against them in court decisions or government policy making. Unequal power relations between researcher and researched also come into consideration here.

A more specific issue I faced during my field research in Haida, Tsimshian, Tlingit and Tahltan territory which is both ethical and methodological, was that of being a "hit and run" anthropologist. With little time and money to conduct research in the communities I visited and no time to build a relationship and the trust that can go with it, I felt I was storming into town, a total stranger, demanding the goods and then leaving with them. I tried to mitigate the damage by approaching people through intermediaries I knew and by giving gifts and offering payment, but it was not nearly good enough in my opinion.

My family was with me during the Alaska trip, which seemed to make most elders more comfortable with me, but in one case I think this complicated the issue. When we visited one elder in Hydaburg on Prince of Wales Island, she seemed to think we were visiting relatives. Several times she asked about people we did not know. I repeatedly explained who I was and what I was there for, but she kept asking if I had seen Robert and his family lately and if Mary was well and so on.

I also learned during my field research that even though I have lived much of my life in northwestern British Columbia and have considerable familiarity with the way native people behave and think, I can still be deluded. When I went to Tahltan country with a student, friend and colleague, Oscar Dennis, I though it was the ideal entry situation. Oscar is a well known, knowledgeable and respected community member. He decided who we should see and dictated the approach and the questioning during the visits. On each of several visits we came away with little information. In addition, several people we wanted to speak to were out of town. I thought we just had bad luck. Oscar told me some time later that those we did visit were reluctant to be interviewed because they are tired of being interviewed and concerned about where the information will go. I had missed that entirely.

Being a community member clearly facilitated research in Gitxsan communities and being aboriginal probably helped in the Tsimshian and Haida communities where I was able to spend some time, but it is difficult for any stranger to come into a community with little or no introduction and expect answers to questions from which the informants will derive no benefit and by which they could potentially be harmed. I will probably never try to do this kind of "hit and run" research again.

Beginning at the Beginning Methodologically

Although this study has evolved to become primarily theoretical, it is based on oral history research. During the years I lived in Kispiox I heard many *adaa'ox* related in various contexts, the way community members usually hear them, as part of the education process of young people or as part of some kind of business. I heard them at feasts. I heard them in meetings held to resolve disputes. I heard them in meetings pertaining to land claims issues. I heard them in interviews in which I was actually trying to solicit other kinds of information. And I heard them informally from my in-laws during family visits and gatherings; and as part of "cultural landscape geography," in which an elder told the history of the land we passed as we traveled. In most cases they were told in the process of the continual re-validation of house territory ownership. Unfortunately for my research, the elders with whom I spent the majority of my time and from whom I learned most often were from the Killer Whale Clan which is the only Gitxsan clan to have originated in the Holocene after the time period in which I am interested for this study. The other clans, the Wolf, Raven and Eagle, seem to be so ancient that their origins are lost in the mists of time. These ancient clans were already in existence at the time of the earliest events recorded in the *adaa'ox* during the late Pleistocene. The Gitxsan Wolf, Raven, and Eagle Clans do not have origin stories. Their earliest stories relate migrations from other places.

Because the earliest Gitxsan histories tell of migrations from territories which are not Gitxsan lands in the present, and because the stories tell of the migration of relatives from the same ancestral groups to other territories where they eventually became Nisga'a, Haida, Wet'suwet'en or members of other nations, I had to look at the early stories of other peoples related to the Gitxsan as well.

In addition to the many texts I have obtained containing the oral histories of the peoples of the study area, I have made several trips to various parts of the area. During all of these trips I was able to see much of the land, often visiting locations important to the oral histories I was hearing and reading. Sometimes I undertook formal interviews, but I am much more comfortable with informal conversations, as are most of the people I have learned from. I have always made it clear though, to those I have spoken to, that I am writing a thesis on this material.

Nearly all of the ethnographic and oral history material pertaining to the Gitxsan was obtained during the years I lived among them (1982-1993) and during the several visits I have made every year since then. During the research for Delgamuukw and the child welfare research I undertook for the Gitxsan, I was told oral histories. I have also approached Gitxsan elders with specific questions regarding my research.

During the summers of 1995, 1996 and 2001 I spent time with the Haida. The first trip was primarily to participate in an archaeological dig with Daryl Fedje and the Haida. During this trip, I had discussions with the Haida archaeologists and Watchmen (historic site interpreters), including the very knowledgeable Haida oral historian Wanagan. I was also able to attend an elder's gathering at the Hot Springs where I presented my research to the elders and was able to ask them questions. The second trip was to present a course for the Haida Watchman Program on oral history research, during which time we investigated ancient Haida oral histories. Some of the course participants were knowledgeable oral historians who were able to provide me with relevant information. The class also spent time at the elder's centre in Skidegate, where we were able to interview elders about oral history. Although my last trip to Haida Gwaii, in 2001, was not specifically for the purpose of research for my thesis, I had the opportunity to discuss Haida oral history with several Haida people.

During the summer of 1996 I spent time in Prince Rupert studying Simalgyax, the Tsimshian language. At this time I was able meet with Tsimshian elders to ask questions about their oral histories. I returned to Prince Rupert in 1997 to participate in a historic park development project for Metlakatla from April to June, during which time I was able to investigate Tsimshian oral histories, particularly with those involved in the historic park development.

In July and August of 1997 I spent time on the coast of Alaska in Haida and Tlingit territory undertaking interviews with elders in Hydaburg, Ketchikan, Craig and Sitka. On that trip I was briefly in southwest Yukon at Tagish and Whitehorse and northwest British Columbia at Atlin and Iskut, but due to problems with the Alaska State ferries I spent most of that trip on the coast of Alaska.

During the summer of 1998 I traveled to Tahltan territory to undertake research, although the trip was not very successful in that regard. I learned more from my guide, Oscar Dennis, than from the elders we approached. I have since interviewed Oscar where I live in Prince George.

Identifying Early Period Oral Histories

The methodology of this study involved some field research and the utilization of a large number of oral histories which had been recorded previously. I began by acquiring as many oral histories from the study area as possible from recorded sources. I have obtained several hundred, although the majority are not from the early period which is most pertinent to this study. (See Appendix I for sources of early period *adaa'ox.*) I sought to identify the stories describing events which occurred during the early period of northern Northwest Coast history, from the earliest time recorded until approximately 9,000 B.P. when, according to the oral histories, most of the recently deglaciated land had been settled. This task was greatly assisted by the ability of Gitxsan elders to tell the stories chronologically. They are able to say which stories are from the earliest time period.

When elders tell a story of a particular event, they often place it in the chronology by the use of important time markers; pivotal among them, for the early time period, is "the flood" (Barbeau n.d.b:96, n.d.c:262, 315, 335; Boas 1916:621-25; DeLaguna 1960:130-31; Garfield and Forrest1961:89; McClellan 1975:74), which appears to be the rapid rise of sea level which occurred primarily between 10,500 B.P. and 9,500 B.P. (Fedje *et al*. 1996a:133). This event affected the peoples of the area profoundly by altering the geography and human settlement patterns. So great was the effect of this event that many versions of the event have been recorded in the oral histories of the peoples throughout the area. Worldwide sea levels rose at least 100 meters (Pielou 1991:126) displacing many human communities along the coast and in the river valleys. Because of the impact and magnitude of the event, I do not find it surprising that it has been recorded in the oral histories of the peoples of the Northwest Coast. The specific experiences of many small groups of people during the flood have been passed down in oral histories. These stories, which have involved different groups of people in different locations, should not be misconstrued as being one story passed from one people to another and told from their own perspective. There are many, many distinct flood experiences which have been orally passed down to the present. It is clear to me that they are distinct experiences because they involve different locations, different participants and different events.

Upon examining the stories which the elders said related events from the early time period, it soon became apparent that many of the environmental conditions and events described were what could be expected during the early postglacial period. As I became familiar with the paleoenvironmental literature for the area, more and more aspects of the stories made sense. I have found many examples which will be described in greater detail later with correlating paleoenvironmental data, but I will present only a few illustrative examples here. The most common example is the previously mentioned "flood" (Barbeau n.d.b:96, n.d.c:262,315,335; Boas 1916:621-625; Deans 1899:66-67; Swanton 1905:231, 1908:116; Wilson 1996:1; DeLaguna 1960:130-131; Garfield 1961:89; McClellan 1975:74) - caused by the rapid rise of sea level as the late Pleistocene glaciers melted. Some stories speak of a treeless landscape (F. Johnson 1986:18) where dense forests are now found. One particularly detailed story describes the marine intrusion of the Skeena River Valley to over 160 kilometers from the present day coast (Barbeau n.d.b:262-4). Many stories relate events and conditions which may be the product of ice-damming, including large lakes in river valleys where none are found now, or large lakes where small lakes are now located, or precipitous floods which may have been caused by ice dams breaking (Maud 1993:95). Stories describe freshwater lakes where inlets of the ocean now exist (Kathleen Hans, pers. com.). Other stories describe the Queen Charlotte Islands as having much greater land mass than today (Swanton 1909:181). Hecate Strait, between the Queen Charlotte Islands and the mainland, is described in stories as being a rolling grassland (Kathleen Hans, pers. com.). Stories describe rivers greatly swollen compared to today, with huge boulders at the mouth of the river (Deans n.d.:44) which may have been washed downstream by the increased water volume from glacial meltwater or from periodic breaking of ice dams. The breaking of such an ice dam is described on the Hoona River on the Queen Charlotte Islands (Deans n.d.:44). Other stories describe what seem to be easily identifiable extinct species such as giant beaver (Barbeau n.d.c:286, 1950a:105, 1961:3; Garfield1961:23; Swanton 1909:219), giant wolves (Swanton 1909:101), which might be dire wolves, and giant cougars (Mary Johnson, pers. com.; Alice Wilson, pers. com.), which might be American lions, while other stories describe animals which may be extinct species such as large shellfish (Barbeau n.d.c:317,352; Garfield1961:113; Swanton 1909:41,199) and some kind of large alligator-like reptile (Barbeau 1950a:295, 316, 1953:305; Deans 1899:58; Swanton 1909:165).

It is not only through descriptions of environmental conditions and events that I can now assign stories to the early period. These stories sometimes relate major social-historical events, such as migrations and wars, which I can now use confidently as time markers for the early period. One version of a story may describe events which are roughly dateable such as the marine intrusion of the valley of the Skeena River. Another version of the same story may provide additional details and events which can then be fitted into the chronology. The oral histories are sometimes told as single events and are sometimes told as part of a chronology. When two individuals relate a series of chronological events which have one or more events in common, it is possible to relate the events in both chronologies to each other. Susan Marsden put considerable energy into organizing such chronologies on timelines when she was preparing for the Delgamuukw case. My research has not focused as closely on timelines as Susan's did, but I have enough familiarity with the early period to be certain that people lived on Haida Gwaii, on the lower Skeena and Nass Rivers and in Southeast Alaska either all through glaciation or while much of the land was still glaciated. During this period certain events occurred, such as migrations down the Skeena River on rafts and overland travels from Laxwiiyip in Tahltan territory to the Blackwater area in northern Gitxsan territory. To relate these stories is detail would go beyond the bounds of what is appropriate, but I can say that there are named groups of people involved, specific events that occurred during these migrations, which distinguish them from other movements along similar routes. One aspect of the early stories which can distinguish them from later stories is that they are often about looking for uninhabited land to occupy. It is apparent that lands were occupied soon after they were deglaciated, because later stories rarely, if ever, mention uninhabited lands. Although many of the stories I worked with were recorded a few generations back, the simplest way to place a story in the chronology is to ask an elder who knows the history of the kin group whose story it is. With the flood being such a profoundly important event of the early period, it is by far the most commonly used device to identify early events. Any event said to have occurred before, during or just after the flood has been of interest to me in this study.

For most stories there are many versions. What makes their historical veracity so convincing is that there is little contradiction between the versions. This is essentially verification of the historicity of the stories by cross-checking, as described by Arima (1976:31). The difference in the versions is primarily in length and amount of detail. For example, the story of the Wolf Clan people traveling under the glacier on the Stikine River can be heard today or recently from Gitxsan elders in Kispiox (Jeff Harris, pers. com, 1986); by Tahltan from Telegraph Creek (Oscar Dennis, pers. com., 1995); and by Tlingit elders in Alaska (Lydia George, pers. com., 1997). The same story was recorded by Julie Cruickshank (1990:39-40) from Angela Sidney, a Tagish-Tlingit woman, in Carcross, Yukon in the 1980s; by Barbeau from a Tsimshian man, George McCauley at Gitxahla near Prince Rupert, British Columbia in 1916; by William Beynon from Nisga'a, Robert Stewart at Kincolith in 1956; and so on. All versions, although separated by great distance, by considerable time, and by language, are remarkably similar. I am certain that all of these stories of traveling under a glacier on the Stikine are versions of the same of event because of the uniqueness of the event, details of the event, the likelihood of a river flowing under a glacier being a fairly short-term phenomena, the events which were said to have preceded and proceded the passage, the clan of the people involved, and the fact that the tellers sometimes even name the individuals involved and sing the same song (in an old version of the Tahltan language regardless of the teller's current language) which was created during the event. Although the Tahltan, Gitxsan, Tlingit, Nisga'a and Tsimshian who related the above-mentioned versions of the story speak distinct languages and live a great distance from each other, they do have one thing in common: they are all descended from people involved in the event described. It is only because they are descended from those who were involved in the event that they are able to tell the story. The oral histories of those descended from the people who traveled under the glacier go on to relate where they migrated to, how they divided up and traveled to separate places and eventually came to be living in Kispiox, Aiyansh, Iskut and other locations. The current tellers of this story often say they are descended from the Tahltan and later migrated to other places, settling down with other peoples, becoming Nisga'a, Gitxsan or others, but never forgetting that their ancestors who traveled under the glacier long ago were from Tahltan territory.

Questions Regarding Story Ownership and Type

During my field research I asked questions which had been unanswered by my study of the existing literature. These questions were primarily about the nature of the stories, particularly regarding ownership. The first question I asked during field research was always about the ownership of the stories so that I did not violate the laws of the people. To do so among the Gitxsan would entail a breech of confidence so great that further work with them would be impossible. I found this was also so with the Tlingit during my research in their territory during the summer of 1997. Tlingit elder Esther Nixs told me, "If you're the same clan I can tell you the stories, but not if you're a different clan." Another Tlingit elder, Esther Shea, told me the same thing. She said, "We are the Brown Bear Tribe and we have our own stories which we only tell to our own tribe. All the other tribes have stories like that, too." The Haida elders whom I spoke to at the elders gathering at the Hot Springs on Haida Gwaii in 1995 had a different perspective. They said that anyone could tell the stories now, but they were probably owned by families in the past. Alaskan Haida elder, Willard Jones, whom I spoke to at Ketchikan, concurred, saying that the stories no longer belong to any one family. The extreme population decline suffered by the Haida because of introduced epidemic disease severely affected their traditional social structure in that many kinship units (houses) became extinct and the others were forced to amalgamate. Under these circumstances, house ownership of oral histories could not be maintained.

Questions regarding types of stories are also important because, to the Gitxsan, lumping together *adaa'ox* (true histories) with *andamatlasxw* (mythological stories) would do serious violence to the stories and to my work. This has been done in the recent past (Cove and MacDonald 1987; MacDonald and Cove 1987) to the great distress of the Gitxsan. To do so makes a mockery of histories which the people take very seriously. The Tsimshian and Nisga'a have a similar perspective to the Gitxsan on the categorization of stories. The Tlingit seem to have a similar perspective to the Gitxsan regarding narrative typology in that they have historical narratives owned by kinship units, but the Raven stories can be told by anyone. Tlingit elder, Esther Shea, told me, "All Tlingit can tell Raven stories because we are all related."

Ethical Issues Encountered During Field Research

During my field research I encountered a number of problems which restricted what I had hoped to accomplish. One of the greatest problems was having too much ground to cover in too little time, with too little money. I also had to be very concerned with the ethical issue of story ownership. I had to try to convince people to whom I was often a stranger, that I would treat the stories with respect and would not write them or repeat them. Only once did an elder refuse to be interviewed about stories which she said were her family's property and not to be shared with strangers.

There were a number of other ethical dilemmas which I confronted during this research, some of which I am unable to resolve. I will discuss these in detail in the conclusion, but I will list them briefly here.

Universities, funding agencies and professional organizations expect researchers to ask permission of community authorities such as bands, tribal councils and tribal corporations to do research in a community. Throughout most of the study area, the chiefs, elders and their houses are seen as the authorities over the kinds of information I sought. Bands, tribal councils, and tribal corporations are seen as administrative units with no social or political authority over the traditional system where oral historical information is kept. To ask such administrative units for permission to speak to elders is insulting to the authority of the elders and chiefs. I had encountered this problem before, with my M.A. research with the Gitxsan. The university wanted me to ask permission from community authorities, but the Gitxsan say band councils are constructed by the Department of Indian Affairs, have authority over administrative matters such as housing, roads, sewers, *et cetera*, but do not usually make major political decisions and have no authority over the chiefs. Therefore, there is no authority higher than the chiefs who were the interviewees.

I also found it embarrassing and demeaning to ask elders and chiefs to sign consent forms. One Tlingit elder asked me if I didn't trust her, and another said that whenever they signed papers they lost something. I was told that these kinds of procedures were sometimes tolerated by white researchers, although with uncertainty and suspicion, but as a native person, I should know better. After that I stopped asking for signed consent forms. In research of oral histories which are the property of kin groups or other subjects where the information is the property of a group, consent forms are rather meaningless, since no individual has the right to give away that property.

The rules designed by universities, funders, and professional associations to protect the interests of aboriginal people are, at the same time, insulting to them because they are usually imposed with little or no consultation and are not seen by indigenous peoples as giving them any credit for judgement. Trying to meet the requirements of the university and the communities put me in an impossible situation. I tried to satisfy ethical guidelines so much as I was able without insulting chiefs and elders. Ethical issues will be dicussed in greater detail in the conclusion.

Benefits of Being an Indigenous Researcher

In spite of the difficulties I encountered by taking the role of researcher, I clearly encountered less opposition than a non-indigenous researcher would encounter in most, but not all, cases. In interviews with Gitxsan, I was nearly always warmly welcomed. I was considered a community member, known and respected. In addition, most Gitxsan elders are familiar with the research process because of the large amount of research activity which revolved around the Delgamuukw case and several other research projects undertaken by the Gitxsan. I was well known in the community as a researcher since I had interviewed over 200 people for the Delgamuukw research alone, some of them, many times. The Gitxsan have generally come to see research in a positive light in recent years, because the majority of research in their communities has been done by community members for the benefit of the Gitxsan.

My first experience with the Haida was during the summer of 1995 when I was invited by archaeologist Daryl Fedje, and Haida researcher Barb Wilson, to spend some time on the archaeology project being undertaken by Parks Canada and the Haida. Daryl Fedje was interested in my work and I was interested in his because of the obvious correlations. I spent some time at the archaeology camp on Lyell Island and at the site on Richardson Island. I was also able to attend an elders gathering at the Hot Springs where I told the elders about my work and was able to ask them some questions. I also presented my work to the public at the Skidegate Museum. The next summer I was asked to return to Haida Gwaii by the Haida Watchman Program to present an oral history workshop. The participants were very knowledgeable and informative. We undertook some research with elders where they gathered at the elders' centre. Although I did not know a lot about the specifics of Haida culture, I found it easy to communicate and feel comfortable with the people I came into contact with because there were obvious commonalities of worldview and behavioural norms.

My experience in Tsimshian country, like my experience in Haida Gwaii, involved being there for reasons other than just my research and having the opportunity to spend some time there. I went to Prince Rupert in Tsimshian country in 1996, directly from my stay on Haida Gwaii. I went there to take two Simalgyax (Tsimshian language) courses. At these courses I met several older, knowledgeable Tsimshian people. Because the Gitxsan and Tsimshian cultures are so similar it was easy to become familiar with the people I met. I also found out I was actually related to some of the women I met. My mother's stepfather was their cousin - a close connection in Indian terms. The next summer, 1997, I returned to Tsimshian country to undertake a project for the community of Metlakatla. During this time I worked closely with a group of people from Metlakata who were training to work as guides on a cultural heritage project the band initiated. It was made clear several times on this project that the indigenous worldview and values that I shared with the community members involved in the project were at odds with those of the non-aboriginal director of the project and other non-aboriginal people involved. This kind of solidarity and understanding facilitated my entry into the community when I wanted to ask questions related to my research.

In the summer of 1997 I visited Tlingit and Haida communities in Alaska. My family came with me on this trip. We took the ferry from Prince Rupert to Ketchikan where we stayed with a man I knew who is a former state legislator and, for many years, legal council for the Tlingit village of Kake. I had planned to spend some time at Ketchikan and on Prince of Wales Island and then return to Prince Rupert and then to Tahltan country, but immediately after we arrived in Ketchikan the commercial fishermen at Prince Rupert captured the Alaska State Ferry and held it hostage for some time. We were therefore unable to return to Prince Rupert, but were forced to travel north to Skagway to reach the mainland. The change of plans did result in a longer stay in Alaska. I interviewed a number of elders in Ketchikan and we spent several days on

Prince of Wales Island where I was only able to meet with a few elders because two elders died soon after we arrived, making it unacceptable for us to disturb community members at that time. While we were on Prince of Wales Island I also took the opportunity to meet with Terry Fiefield of the State Archaeological Service and Jim Baichtal, both of who have been involved in the exciting archaeological/paleoenvironmental research which has been undertaken on the Island in recent years. Here I am referring to the discovery of brown bears dating through the last glaciation, proving conclusively that glacial refugia substantial enough to support large omnivores existed on Prince of Wales Island, and to the 9,800 year old human remains and possibly associated stone tools (Heaton and Grady 1993; Dixon, Heaton and Fifield 1997; Heaton, Talbot and Shields 1996). At Ketchikan and on Prince of Wales Island I found that most elders were very friendly and receptive to my questions; however, one elder refused to meet with me and, as previously mentioned, one elder did not seem to understand who I was and what I wanted, seeming to believe, instead, that we were visiting relatives.

My research in Tahltan country in 1998 was the least successful, which was surprising to me because I thought I had the ideal entry situation. I went there with Oscar Dennis, a Tahltan from Iskut, and stayed with him and his family. Oscar has been my student at the University of Northern British Columbia since 1995, and is now my graduate student. He is a mature student, knowledgeable and respected in the community. We went to visit some elders in Iskut and came away with very little information. We also traveled to Dease Lake and Telegraph Creek where we, again, obtained very little information. Lastly we traveled to a hunting camp in tundra country at Klapana where many Tahltan were gathered to hunt caribou, marmot, ptarmigan and other species. Here we had a great visit, heard some good stories and obtained a little information. Through all these visits I thought that when we were unsuccessful in obtaining information it was just because we had chosen the wrong people to talk to. It was only later that Oscar told me that we were probably politely and subtly rebuffed because the elders are tired of being researched and worried about the uses the information will be put to.

Although my reception during my research was not universally positive it was clear that being allowed entry into Gitxsan homes, lives and stories was greatly facilitated by my status as a community member. With the Haida, Tsimshian and Tlingit, although a stranger from a different culture, I felt my familiarity with a similar culture, with indigenous ways of thinking and interacting, facilitated interaction. With the Tahltan, I felt much more a stranger. Other than in Gitxsan country, and to some degree in Tsimshian and Haida country, my short visits were far too brief to allow a relationship and trust to be established. And, as the Tahltan elders seemed to have feared, I was there to gather their precious knowledge in exchange for very little.

Chapter 4

Ethnography: The Gitxsan and the Issue of Ethnography

Ethnography As An Issue

Although this dissertation discusses a group of related cultures, it focuses primarily on the Gitxsan perspective of oral histories. There are similarities among the cultures of the study area which are pointed out from time to time throughout the thesis. Dissimilarities are also noted at times. Ideally, the ethnographic section of this thesis would describe all of the cultures mentioned but I will only be providing an ethnography of the Gitxsan. The primary reason I will be doing that is that I only feel qualified to describe Gitxsan culture in such a broad way. Ethnographic materials are available for all of the cultures relevant to this dissertation but in trying to write ethnographies for cultures other than the Gitxsan, I found I could not acquire enough relevant materials and information to answer all my questions and to feel confident that the descriptions I provided would be deemed accurate by members of the cultures being described. I lived among the Gitxsan for many years, was a member of the community and had considerable opportunity to learn about Gitxsan culture from culture members. To be able to even approach that standard with the Nisga'a, Tsimshian, Tlingit, Tahltan and Haida is far beyond the possible for this thesis.

I believe it is possible for non-culture members to write accurate ethnographic materials. I also believe that it takes considerable time, effort and sensitivity to be able to accomplish it. Later in this thesis I will discuss ethical issues which can arise in the undertaking of research, ethnographic and other. It is sufficient to say here that I want to try very hard not to be guilty of writing inaccuracies about cultures of which I do not have intimate familiarity. Drafts of this thesis have been given to several members of the cultures alluded to here for their comment. Any inaccuracies they find will be addressed. I will continue to ask culture members to comment until it is published.

The Gitxsan's Relatives

The Gitxsan perspective on oral history is primarily focused upon in this thesis but, as has been previously mentioned, it is not possible to discuss ancient Gitxsan histories without considering those of related peoples. The *adaa'ox* indicate that a number of neighbouring peoples are related to the Gitxsan. These peoples share overlapping common ancestry in that some Gitxsan houses share common ancestry with some of the kinship groups within these other peoples. Ethnographic descriptions of peoples related to the Gitxsan and referred to in this thesis will not be provided, although their similarities to and differences from the Gitxsan will be alluded to from time to time.

The Gitxsan are aware, not only of relationships derived through common ancient origin, but of relationships initiated and maintained over time. The *adaa'ox* often tell of intermarriage and other interweavings with neighbouring peoples throughout their long history in the northeast British Columbia-southeast Alaska area. Some of those relations are still maintained. They are maintained when Gitxsan relate how their ancestors came from Tahltan territory or once lived in Tlingit or Tsimshian territory. They are maintained when a Gitxsan marries a Haida or Haisla. They are maintained when Gitxsan trade moose meat or dried salmon for Nisga'a oulachan grease. These ancient relationships are even maintained when the Gitxsan dispute territorial boundaries with their neighbours utilizing the ancient method of telling the *adaa'ox*. The Gitxsan are very aware of how closely related they are to the Nisga'a and Tsimshian with whom they share history, borders, language and culture. They are also aware of their relatedness to those who may differ in language and who may not share borders but who do share history and culture.

One factor which has universally affected all the peoples of concern in this study is colonization. All have been subjected to loss of lands and resources, missionization, western education and other consequences of European contact. One especially devastating affect of European contact on the Gitxsan and their relatives was introduced epidemic diseases. Robert Boyd estimates that over 80% of the population of the Northwest Coast died in the first 100 years after European contact (1990:135). Historical demographer, Cole Harris, believes that over 90% of the aboriginal population of British Columbia was killed by introduced epidemics (pers. com.). The Gitxsan and related peoples are very aware of the commonality of the legacy of colonization.

Languages of the Gitxsan and Related Peoples

The northern Northwest Coast is a linguistically diverse area. The relationship between some of these languages is debated. According to Thompson and Kinkade (1990:30), it is sometimes difficult to decide if two communities speak different languages or only different dialects.

Tsimshian consists of two or, perhaps three, languages according to Thompson and Kinkade; the Nisga'a and Gitxsan speaking one language and the Coast Tsimshian speaking another (1990:31). Southern Tsimshian may be a distinct language (Dunn 1995). Garfield and Wingert call Southern Tsimshian a dialect of Coast Tsimshian (1951:6). Tsimshian is usually said to be a language isolate (Halpin and Seguin 1990:267) although it had once been classed as Penutian (Sapir 1915). The oral historical record of the Tsimshian-speaking peoples does not seem to support the contention of any connection between themselves and the Penutian-speakers of Oregon within the last 10,000 years.

Haida is a language isolate (Blackman 1990:240) which Thompson and Kinkade say (1990:31) has considerable dialectical diversity with two surviving dialect clusters, Skidegate and Masset, as well as an extinct dialect, Ninstints. Enrico seems uncertain about the number of Haida dialects which once existed (1995:1-2).

Tlingit, it is contended by Thompson and Kinkade (1990:31), is related to Eyak and Athapaskan. Krauss and Golla (1981:67) and de Laguna (1990:203) support this contention. According to Thompson and Kinkade (1990:31), Tlingit has only mild dialect diversity. At one time it was believed that Tlingit, Athapaskan and Haida were related (Sapir 1915) in a grouping called the Na-Dene languages. Later work cast doubt on the tenability of the inclusion of Haida in this grouping (Krauss 1979; Levine 1979).

The Tahltan, Tagish, Tuchone, Wet'suwet'en and Ts'ets'a'ut (who no longer exist as a social and political group) are Athapaskan or Dene speakers. As previously mentioned the designation of "Inland Tlingit" may be an artificial designation created by anthropologists. The people of Atlin consider themselves Tlingit just as fully as the Tlingit of the coast and the Tlingit of the coast consider the people of Atlin their relatives. McClellan (1981:469) has said that the Inland Tlingit may have formerly been Athapaksan speakers who recently became Tlingit-speakers, implying that they are not really Tlingit. This may indicate a superficial understanding of the origins of the kinship units and nations of the northern Northwest Coast which is not as apparent in an earlier work in which she gives credit to the idea that the Inland Tlingit may be an amalgamation of Tlingit and Dene-speaking peoples (1975:52). Many Gitxsan, Nisga'a, Tsimshian, Tlingit and Tahltan kinship units originated in different nations speaking different languages from those they speak today as was previously mentioned in the example of the people whose ancestors traveled under the Glacier on the Stikine. The corpus of oral history of the area documents the very complex relationships between the peoples residing there. The oral histories describe the history of settlement, migrations, divisions and amalgamations of groups of people over a very long period of time.

Language obviously indicates relationships between peoples, but those relationships may be more complex than is usually understood by western scholars. Scholars tend to see peoples such as the Gitxsan or Tahltan as unified groups with shared history, ancestry and language, but the oral histories make it clear that this is not so. Those kinship units which make up a nation today may have had several different origins and may have spoken several different languages in the past. Language change for some groups was not a gradual process but a sudden one when they joined speakers of a different language.

The Changing Geography of the Study Area

The geography, climate and environment of the study area have undergone significant change since the time period in which the oral histories with which I am concerned here took place. The time period of the study was one of a very rapidly changing environment. The earliest stories describe a treeless land (F. Johnson 1986:18), where large lakes filled river valleys then drained in precipitous floods (Maud 1993:95). They describe a land drastically altered by lower sea levels with land masses much larger than today or land masses where none are now found (Swanton 1909:181). These stories describe the rising ocean waters, the flooding of the Skeena River valley and its eventual re-emergence (Barbeau n.d.b:262-4). The stories which come after the ones utilized in this study recount how the environment became more stable, eventually becoming the land we see today.

The paleoenvironmentalists tell a similar story to that of the oral historians. During the last glacial maximum sea level was about one hundred meters lower than it is today, and areas that are now submerged continental shelf were then exposed coastal plains (Pielou 1991:126). Glacial refugia were dispersed along the coast of British Columbia and Alaska (Fladmark 1979a:55; Pielou 1991:131-2). A low-lying refugium existed along the east side of the Queen Charlotte Islands where Hecate Strait is today (Pielou 1991:133; Warner, Mathewes and Clague 1982:675) and another is known to have existed on Prince of Wales Island, Alaska (Heaton and Grady 1993:98; Heaton, Talbot and Shields 1996:190). It is believed by a number of paleoenvironmentalists and archaeologists that it is likely these refugia provided "stepping stones" for humans traveling along the coast before deglaciation (Fladmark 1979a; Heaton, Talbot and Sheilds 1996; Pielou 1991).

As the ice melted, the coastal environment changed rapidly. Low-lying areas became inundated (Pielou 1991:167). As greater land areas became exposed, vegetation quickly became established (Pielou 1991:168). Rivers ran again - in torrents as they carried away the meltwater. River valleys were sometimes clogged with ice and gravel which formed dams which temporarily stopped the flow of water causing the creation of glacial lakes (Gottesfeld 1985:44). Sometimes the ice and gravel dams caused rivers to flow backward in their channels as water drained in other than the usual direction (Gottesfeld 1985:46). At the same time that all these changes were taking place, the coastal forebulge which had formed in the earth's crust along the coast where the glaciers were thin and less weighty than inland, collapsed, causing sea levels to rise in some locations and drop in others relative to the land (Clague *et al.* 1982a:614). The heavily glaciated areas somewhat inland were crushed by the weight of the ice so that as the sea rose the valleys became temporarily inundated before the land rebounded (Gottesfeld 1985:37). The correlations between these stories told by tellers with very distinct ways of creating and recording knowledge are what inspired me to undertake this study.

Today the territory of the Gitxsan and their neighbours is a bountiful land. Rivers, creeks and lakes abound everywhere. Mountains dominate the landscape. Forests of cedar, hemlock, spruce, pine, birch and aspen cover much of the territory. The rivers, streams and lakes contain many species of fish. The forests abound with mammals large and small. Prolific plant life provides food, medicines and materials the people need to live.

The Gitxsan

Although I will focus on the Gitxsan throughout this thesis, I will also refer to peoples related to the Gitxsan as indicated by the oral histories. Those peoples are the Tsimshian, Nisga'a, Tlingit, Haida, Wet'suwet'en and Tahltan. There are both similarities and differences between the Gitxsan and the related peoples dicussed in this document. These shared and divergent traits will be mentioned from time to time. I will begin by describing the Gitxsan.

Although much of Gitxsan territory is well inland, they are culturally a West Coast people. They are bordered on the west by the Tsimshian and on the northwest by the Nisga'a. All of their other neighbours are Dene-speaking peoples who share a considerable number of cultural characteristics usually considered West Coast culture traits by anthropologists such as a clan system, matrilineal kinship, hereditary chiefs' names, the potlatch and so on. The peoples of the area consider the development of cultures as a complex process in which all cultures have influence on their neighbours. They do not consider cultural influence to have followed a simple unidirectional pattern from coast to interior.

Territory

The Gitxsan (people of 'Ksan - the Skeena River) live along the upper Skeena River and its tributaries. The major population centers have primarily been located in the southern part of their territory, but their lands reach far to the north. Today the Gitxsan number around 5,000 people and live in six villages. All but one of these villages existed before European contact. Kispiox, Gitanmaax, Gitsegulka, Kitwangax, and Kitwancool are ancient villages. Glen Vowel is a mission village which originated in 1898. Gisga'ga'as and Kuldo'o are two villages which were abandoned during the lifetime of people still living. The area around these villages continues to be used for fishing, hunting and trapping and a few people have begun to move back to Gisga'ga'as.

The territory of the Gitxsan is especially bountiful because it lies where three of the six major ecological zones found in Canada meet. The southern and western part of Gitxsan territory lie in the west coast ecological zone; the eastern part is in the interior cordilleran zone; and the northern part is in the subarctic. This positioning affords access to a wide variety of resources.

Resources and Seasonal Round

Much of Gitxsan territory is mountainous with ecological zones changing radically in short distances with elevation. The rivers and streams present a great bounty in all species of west coast salmon. Salmon was and remains the most important food source with runs of spring salmon beginning in May, runs of coho continuing until November, and steelhead salmon available all through the winter. Today, as in the past, Gitxsan families catch and preserve most of their year's supply of salmon in July and August (Morrell 1985:20). Caribou were once the most important large mammal, but as the Little Ice Age has receded, moose have replaced caribou throughout most of Gitxsan territory (Daly 1988:347). Bears were once commonly hunted and eaten but are not sought as often now. Some hunters still travel to the alpine areas to hunt mountain goats. Beaver, porcupine, rabbits and other small mammals are still eaten. Many species of berries such as saskatoons, huckleberries, wild strawberries, high bush cranberries, wild crabapples and soap berries are gathered in Gitxsan territory (Haeussler 1985:2). Other forms of plant food utilized include wild celery and pine cambium (Gottesfeld 1992:149; People of 'Ksan 1980). Trout and other lake fish are taken. Many species of medicinal plants were gathered in the past and several are still utilized regularly such as devil's club, Indian hellebore, juniper, water lily root, balsam bark and spruce pitch (Gottesfeld and Anderson 1988; Gottesfeld 1992:152; Harris 1993, 1994b).

Although no Gitxsan territory borders the ocean, they have access to marine resources either through trade or direct access. In the past, large numbers of Gitxsan would travel the Grease Trails to the Nass River in early spring for the eulachon fishery (MacDonald and Cove 1987:X). Today some Gitxsan still participate directly in the eulachon fishery on the Nass or at Kitimaat. Many others obtain eulachon grease in trade. Grease is a highly desired condiment and medicinal substance which is found in virtually every Gitxsan home. Other sea foods were and are traded from the coast, including seaweed, clams, cockles, abalone, halibut, sea lion and seal.

Many forest products were put to technological uses. Cedar was used for houses, crest poles, mats, baskets, bark clothing, masks, bowls and many other items (Daly 1988:331; Gottesfeld 1992:153; Hebda and Mathewes 1984:711; Stewart 1984). Gitxsan canoes were made of cottonwood (*gan 'mal* = canoe wood) (Morrell 1985:20). Willow was used to make fish traps (Morrell 1985:20). Birch and pine were and are the species primarily used for firewood. Gitxsan artists are still prolific carvers of cedar, particularly, and some other woods such as alder and birch as well. Traditional Gitxsan material culture also utilized stone and bone (Albright 1987; Ames 1979).

Many types of fur-bearers have been trapped by the Gitxsan, including marten, wolf, lynx, wolverine, fisher, weasel, fox, squirrel, marmot, rabbit, and beaver. Marten and weasel were especially important for ceremonial clothing and "groundhog" (marmot) was used for blankets. The Gitxsan word for marmot, *gwiikxw*, is used today to mean "dollar" because "groundhog" hides were traditionally used as a unit of value. Trapping declined in the 1950s because of the very low price for furs, but as the prices increased in the 1980s many Gitxsan resumed or began trapping.

Traditionally, most of the year was spent living in the villages on the major rivers. The first food gathering activity of the year was considered to be the move many Gitxsan made in early spring to the eulachon fishing camp on the Nass River in Nisga'a territory. Soon after they returned to their villages it would be time for salmon fishing to begin. Fishing sites were sometimes within daily walking distance of the village. Other fishing sites were further away, and families would camp at their fishing site and return to the village when they had smoked enough fish. Fishing would continue all through the summer. In late summer the men would go to the mountains to hunt mountain goats, caribou and moose, while the women and children would pick berries. Some hunting, fishing, gathering and trapping continued throughout the year, but winter was also a time for visiting and for ceremonies. Those potlatches which were planned were held during winter as were the dancing society performances.

Aspects of the traditional seasonal round are still maintained today by the Gitxsan, especially salmon fishing and fall hunting. Rapid means of transportation have enabled many people to return home daily from fishing, hunting, gathering and trapping, but many families still camp out for all of those activities. Only a few Gitxsan do their own eulachon fishing, but a lively trade in eulachon grease still occurs. Today potlatches are not reserved for winter, but [illegible] occur at anytime.

Social Structure

The Gitxsan cannot be understood at all without knowledge of their social structure. The social system is highly developed and defines who the Gitxsan are. It is based on kinship which is reckoned matrilineally. Each individual is born into his or her mother's kinship unit called a house. The house is the land and resource-owning unit, it is an economic unit and it is an independent political entity. To be Gitxsan, one must belong to a Gitxsan house. The Gitxsan as a nation or people can be defined as those belonging to a set of houses which are considered to be Gitxsan. One can be born Gitxsan by virtue of being the child of a female member of a Gitxsan house or can become Gitxsan by being adopted into a Gitxsan house by means of a formal procedure where the adoption is validated in the potlatch. There is no other way to be recognized as Gitxsan.

Gitxsan think of each other, first and foremost, as house members. Elders will always remember what house a person comes from even if they cannot remember the person's name. Each Gitxsan obtains his or her position in society from house membership. Traditionally, most or all of one's sustenance came from house-owned lands and, today, one's house lands are the only place where resources can be gathered without special permission. The house is responsible for the welfare of each of its members and it is responsible for the crimes or errors of its members. When an offense is committed by a house member, the entire house pays compensation and when an offense is committed against a house member, the entire house is compensated. This still holds true to some degree today.

Although each Gitxsan is biologically equally related to members of his or her mother's and father's houses, the social relationship between an individual and his or her own house is much stronger. Usually the emotional relationship is stronger as well. One's matrilineal cousins are considered brothers and sisters while one's patrilateral cousins are considered the preferred marriage partner. The Gitxsan say one should marry into his or her father's house but to marry one's matrilineal cousin, no matter how far removed, is to commit *gaats* (incest), which is considered a very serious crime which threatens the social order. *Gaats* was once considered so serious that it could be punished by death or banishment, and is still fairly rare and taken seriously. To be *gaats* even today will affect the outcome of a Gitxsan person's life in that they will rarely attain high rank and will be disparaged throughout life for the offense.

To say that most Gitxsan individuals are closer in every way to their own house members than to their father's "side" is not to say that people do not have close relationships with their father's relatives. Each individual also has an important relationship with his or her father's house. One's father's house is called his or her *wilksiwitxw*. Traditionally, children were usually raised in their father's house, from resources from their father's lands. From birth to death special services are provided by one's *wilksiwitxw*. The most obvious function of the *wilksiwitxw* today is the services they provide when a person dies. They are repaid for these services by the house to which the deceased person belongs. The father's house remains in a strongly supportive and educational role for most Gitxsan.

The relationship between two houses which is created by marriage is often maintained intergenerationally. As mentioned previously, the Gitxsan say one should marry into the house of his or her father which, in anthropological terms, is a patrilateral cross-cousin marriage preference. The genealogical research which I undertook indicated that the preference for cross-cousin marriage is still being fulfilled. We did not expect to find strong evidence of cross-cousin marriage since marriages are no longer arranged but the research showed that cross-cousin marriages are still occurring far more often that could be expected by chance.

Houses

The basic social units of Gitxsan society are, both today and in the past, matrilineal kinship units called *wilp* (houses). The houses are named after their highest ranked chief, for example, the House of Ts'iibasaa. I have used the translation of the Gitxsan word for the kinship unit because there is no appropriate anthropological term. Barbeau called the houses "families" (Barbeau 1929:9) but did not seem to understand their composition very well. He did not see them as biological units contending that house members did not live outside their own villages very often, which is not true

(Barbeau 1929:9). Garfield and Wingert (1951:22) describe what is probably a house as "household or lineage." Adams (1973:3) utilizes the correct term for a house but does not understand their composition or function. He believes that houses are corporate entities which are continually reforming to exploit resource opportunities, with little regard to kinship rules (Adams 1973). This is most emphatically incorrect.

A house falls somewhere between a lineage and a clan in anthropological reckoning. A small house might consist of only one lineage with the biological relationship between all members well known, but a large house may consist of several lineages. Houses are kinship units whose members may or may not know their exact biological relationship. When it is not known, it is assumed (because that is the logic of house membership) that one is born into the house of one's mother. House membership only changes by adoption (*ts'imilgudit*) under rare circumstances, such as when a house is nearly extinct and adopts people from a closely related house to ensure its survival.

The name "house" for the kinship unit derives from the fact that, traditionally, there was an actual dwelling which was the focus of the kinship unit. The chief of the house, his close male relatives, the wives and children of male residents, some divorced or widowed female relatives, and other house members and affines would live in the dwelling belonging to the kinship unit. Because the post-marital residence rule was avunculocal, most adult female house members lived in the home of their husbands.

Children would be raised by their parents in their father's house but young men, especially chiefs' heirs, would "return home" at puberty to their maternal uncles to complete their education and take their place in the house. Regardless of where a person lived, the village where his or her house group's dwelling stood, was considered home. Even a woman who had lived all her life in the house of her father and then her husband would consider her maternal uncle's house her true home. At death, all Gitxsan were traditionally cremated and the funeral potlatch was put up by their house members in their own village. Today Gitxsan people are buried by their house members and a funeral potlatch is held for every Gitxsan person. Nearly all Gitxsan are buried in their village of origin, even if they have lived away for a long time or have never lived in the village. The house must give permission if other arrangements are to be made.

Houses are the owners of all important property in Gitxsan society. Each house owns one or more territories where resources are gathered and each house owns several fishing sites on the major salmon rivers. A fishing site owned by a house may be surrounded by the territory of another house but the fishing site owner is allowed enough land to catch and preserve fish and to camp. Other property owned by a house includes the *adaa'ox* (oral histories), *aiyuukxws* (crests), *lim'x oo'iiy* (songs), hereditary names, dances, regalia and other things, material and immaterial. In traditional Gitxsan society there was little personal property, nearly everything was owned by the house. Today, there is more property considered to be personal, such as a house and lot on reserve, cars, boats, *et cetera* but all property considered important, all property which is eternal, is still house-owned property.

One of the most important possessions of each house is a set of hereditary names. Names are acquired in conjunction with important historical events. There was originally a story to explain the origin of every name, although many have been forgotten now. In some cases there is a name, crest, song and *adaa'ox* which go together, all relating the same event. There are many categories of hereditary names, including girls' names, boys' names, young men's names, young women's names, adult names which are unranked, ranked names of chiefs advisors (*gaak)*, and the highest chief of the house (*'wii simooget)*. The rank of names changes over time with the accomplishments of the holders of the names, so that if the position of highest rank changes, so too, will the name of the house. This is not extraordinary, but usually takes a few generations to occur, as name-holders increase or decrease the prestige and, eventually, position of a name by their actions.

Clans and Crests

Each Gitxsan house belongs to one of four clans. The definition of clan which I am using here is the one used by the Gitxsan and neighbouring peoples. It refers to all those houses which use the same major crest or crests. The houses in a clan may or may not have common origins. The relationship between houses in a clan can be very complex due to a long history of subdivisions and amalgamations.

The Gitxsan have four clans which are the Wolf Clan, *Lax Gibuu* (literally: concerning the wolf); the Fireweed or Killerwhale Clan, *Gisgaast* or *Gisgahaast* (*haast* being fireweed); the Eagle Clan, *Lax Skiikx* (concerning the eagle); and the Frog Clan which is called *Lax Seel* in the eastern villages and *Ganada* in the western villages. The direct translation for *Lax Seel* and *Ganada* is unknown. The clans are exogomous units which order marriages and other social arrangements, but which have no economic or political power.

The houses within a clan very often know how they are related in that they may have subdivided from another house anywhere throughout their thousands of years of remembered history. This does not just apply to the Gitxsan but to many neighbouring peoples as well. Members of a Gitxsan Wolf Clan house in Kispiox may know their historical relationship with Wolf houses in other Gitxsan villages, as well as among the Wet'suwet'en, Tsimshian, Nisga'a, Tlingit, Tahltan or others. The members of a Gitxsan house may consider themselves closely related to members of a Wet'suwet'en house because of common ancient origins, while they would consider themselves unrelated to a house from a different clan which has resided in the same village with them for a very long time. Throughout the area of my study, the clans and moieties have equivalencies in each nation. They may have different names, but they recognize the relationship by their shared history and crests.

Crests, in my opinion, have not generally been well understood by anthropologists. The peoples of the study area say that the crests represent incidents in the history of a house or group of houses. The most lengthy treatment of the crests of the Tsimshian-speaking peoples is the structural analysis of Halpin is which crests are treated as entirely symbolic with no relationship to history or land ownership (1973). Crests have sometimes been proclaimed by anthropologists (Garfield and Wingert 1951:41-3; Halpin and Seguin 1990:276) to have been acquired during encounters with "supernatural beings." As I understand it, this is not incorrect , but not always necessarily so. They are related to power in that they represent the power acquired by the ancestors during their lives on the land, but "supernatural" beings may not be involved at all. Crests are taken to commemorate extraordinary events and may represent something which is considered powerful but not necessarily categorically different from other entities as in the concept of "supernatural." Western scholars are inclined to consider Gitxsan spiritual views in the dichotomous terms of natural versus supernatural, human versus spirit/god, animate versus inanimate, *et cetera.* The Gitxsan see the spiritual or powerful more in terms of a continuum. All entities are alive, have power and spirit, some more than others. It cannot be said that this is a man or an animal, not a spirit, and this is a spirit not a man or an animal. All entities are both natural and spiritual, all events are both natural and supernatural so that it is not, in my opinion, accurate to say that crests are acquired exclusively during encounters with supernatural beings. I have been told by the Gitxsan that crests are acquired during important historical events. If all beings and, therefore, events are spiritual then these would be "supernatural" events, but some of these events would be very low on the natural-supernatural continuum while others would be high. When a house commemorated their first encounter with Europeans by taking a crest which represented the trader's unusual-looking dog, this was not considered a "supernatural" event but an important historical event. Other crests represent extraordinary events which the people could not easily explain in ordinary, natural, terms. These crests derive from events which fall closer to the supernatural end of the natural-supernatural continuum.

Wilnadaahl

Another Gitxsan concept poorly understood in the anthropological literature is *wilnadaahl*. The Gitxsan use the word *wilnadaahl* to refer to a group of related houses. *Wilnadaahl* cannot be translated into existing anthropological terminology. Barbeau (1929:9) applied the term "clan" to *wilnadaahl,* but he was only able to do this by distorting *wilnadaahl* and Gitxsan reality by making them some kind of fixed entity which they are not. He made up names for related groups of houses such as "Wild Rice Clan" and "Frog-Woman Clan" (1929) in an attempt to create static units which do not exist in the Gitxsan conception. John Adams (1973:23-4), too, misunderstood *wilnadaahl*. He claimed that every village had two "sides," each made up of all the members of the clans which were resident there, and that each side had at least two groups of people with separate migration myths. Adams contended that these groups with separate migration myths are the *wilnadaahl* and that they are land owning groups which continuously adjust the number of houses contained in them as resources fluctuate. All of this is incorrect.

Wilnadaahl is actually far more complex. *Wilnadaahl* is a flexible term which can refer to anything from one house to all the houses in a clan. It always refers to houses within a clan, but it could refer to a number of groupings such as houses which currently reside in the same village, the houses which participated in a particular potlatch, the houses which acted together in a particular historical incident, the houses which originated in a particular location, *et cetera*. The meaning of the term *wilnadaahl* is taken from the context in which it is used at the time. Familiarity with the relationships between houses related in the *adaa'ox* often makes a particular usage of the term *wilnadaahl* understandable.

Village

Gitxsan villages are always located on good fishing streams, usually major rivers like the Skeena and Babine, often at their confluence with other major rivers. The large rivers were once major transportation corridors by canoe in summer and by foot on the ice in winter. A network of trails skirted most of the larger rivers leading from village to village and to resource gathering places in Gitxsan territory and beyond. These travel routes are often called the "Grease Trails" because they supported a lively trade, particularly in oil or grease rendered from oulachen fish, that reached throughout central and northern British Columbia and beyond. These trails were veritable highways, which although little used now, are still easy to identify because they have been worn so deep and wide.

Gitxsan villages are not political or economic units. They are collections of houses which have come together through historical circumstances which can usually be traced through the *adaa'ox*. The houses which composed a village were independent units which were ranked only for ceremonial purposes. That ranking was subject to change as fortunes rose and fell over time.

There is no real head chief in a Gitxsan village because each house is entirely independent in its affairs, but the villages have a *miin simooget* who speaks on behalf of the village during ceremonial occasions such as to welcome visitors to the village. The *miin simooget* has no power to make decisions for the village. Time of war was an occasion when all the houses of a village acted together. They would also act together for fish weir building and for the first salmon ceremony every spring.

Every Gitxsan village has houses from either two or three clans residing in it. The village site is on land which has been set aside from the house territory which surrounds it. The chief of the house upon whose land the village sat had no special status in the village. Villages are considered to be both a general location and a group of houses so that it is possible for the houses composing the village to change over time and for the location of a village to change over time. Kispiox village, for instance, is remembered to have been located in at least six places (Duff n.d.; Harris 1995).

All of the current Gitxsan villages, with the exception of Glen Vowel which is a mission village, are very ancient according to the *adaa'ox*. Kitwancool, although in a somewhat different location, was said to have existed before "the flood," which would make it very ancient, indeed. Some villages, such as Kispiox and Gitsegukla, originated when the dispersal from T'xemlax'amid occurred during a climatic downturn, possibly at the end of the hypsithermal, 5,000 to 4,000 years ago (Pielou1991:291).

Although the Gitxsan traditionally had no overall political organization, each Gitxsan village, and the Gitxsan as a whole, are held together by bonds of kinship, language, territory and history. An individual is more likely to marry within his or her village than without and is more likely to marry a Gitxsan from another village than someone who is not Gitxsan. The dialectical differences between Gitxsan communities are small.

Rank

Rank is another phenomena which is not well understood by anthropologists writing about the Gitxsan. The Gitxsan have often been lumped together with the other Tsimshian-speaking peoples in this regard, which may have resulted in inaccuracies (Garfield and Wingert 1951:27; Adams 1973:37-8). Gitxsan society does not seem to have been as highly structured as Tsimshian society. There is no question that Gitxsan society was one of rank, not class. Garfield claimed that the interests of chiefs were "class interests" (1951:27), "Tribal chiefs and the members of their lineages were especially privileged upper class men and women" (1951:27) and "Class was a matter of birth" (1951:28). None of these statements made by Garfield is an accurate reflection of Gitxsan social structure. Adams presents a similar perspective of Gitxsan society saying the "Gitksan are divided into two classes" (1973:37). The Gitxsan would contradict this characterization of their society, saying that the highest and lowest ranked people were members of the same family, were uncle and nephew, and that the chiefly uncle loved and cared for his lowest ranked nephew who lived under his roof.

Being of high rank in Gitxsan society, far from freeing one of work, entailed additional responsibilities. Although rank was inherited, there was no set line of accession, and merit always entered into inheritance. Although children of high-ranking parents were, and to some degree still are, raised to inherit high-ranking positions, there is no guarantee that they will, in fact, take those positions. A chief must prove his worthiness by hard work, appropriate behaviour, generosity, feasting, wisdom, demonstrating cultural knowledge and by exhibiting other chiefly characteristics.

A chief's esteem is maintained by distributing wealth rather than by accumulating and consuming it. This is still very true today in Gitxsan communities. Generosity and chiefliness are nearly synonymous. A chief's greatest obligation is the welfare of his people. A Gitxsan chief is, both literally and figuratively, "feeding the people all the time." Other house members support their chiefs because individuals are always seen as house members and the fortunes of the chief and their house is the fortune of all.

Each house has a *'wii simoget* who is the highest ranked chief of the house. The *'wii simooget* is supported, assisted and advised by the other chiefs of the house, called *gaak*, wing chiefs, who range in number from two to thirteen in Gitxsan houses. The house members without ranked names are called *lax gi'gyet*, ordinary people. Those who begin life as *lax gi'gyet*, can become *simooget* by hard work and correct living. Chiefs do not have dictatorial power over members of their house. All adult house members have a say in house affairs, but the word of chiefs is generally considered more influential.

Houses within a clan and within a village are ranked relative to each other, but this ranking is largely ceremonial. It does not give a house authority over other houses or access to any kind of additional resources. The ranking of houses is most obvious in the seating positions within the feast hall.

The Gitxsan system in which no house has any real authority over others and no claim on their resources and in which merit is considered along with heredity in the choosing of chiefs, is too flexible to be considered a class system. Western understandings of authority and hierarchy may have been projected on Gitxsan society by those who have proclaimed it a class system.

In the past, the Gitxsan had slaves who were not part of the social system. Slaves were war captives and the children of war captives. During raids, efforts were made to capture high-ranking people who could be ransomed back to their families. Some high-ranked female captives became the wives of their captors. Lower-ranked people who were not ransomed back might remain slaves, although they often managed to escape. Those who did not, usually eventually married lower-ranking Gitxsan and became part of Gitxsan society. The stigma of ancestral slavery could not have been great in Gitxsan society since I have never heard anyone say that someone was descended from slaves, which I have heard mentioned in other Northwest Coast communities.

The Potlatch

The potlatch, called the "feast" by Gitxsan people speaking in English, has been a central institution of the Gitxsan since ancient times. *Adaa'ox* mention the reciprocal relationship of the feast since the very early times. In Gitxsanimx, a small feast to which primarily village residents are invited, is called *li'liget*. A larger event to which people from many villages are invited is called *yuukxw*. I have personally participated in over one hundred feasts either as guest or host, and continue to return to Kispiox to participate in important feasts.

Feasts are held to validate the transaction of important business. The most common reason for a feast to be held is a death. A feast will be put on for everyone, from a stillborn baby to a great chief. In the case of a great chief, his or her hereditary name will be passed on to an heir and with it the responsibility for leading the house. Feasts are also held to erect gravestones, to erect grave fences, to erect totem poles, to put on new chief's robes, to "wipe off shame," for marriages and divorces. In the past, feasts were held when a baby received its first name and when girls reached puberty. These last two types of feasts are more rare now. Feasts can also be held to cement peace between nations.

In the feast, social relations in the community are made manifest. The participants are divided into hosts and guests; the guests being considered witnesses to the business being conducted. The host clan will not be seated but will be conducting the business, serving the food, contributing and distributing the gifts and so on. The seating of the guests is arranged by clan, house and rank in a complex arrangement that only experts know. The rank, personal accomplishments, relationship to the hosts, and services provided will determine the gifts given to each witness.

Worldview and Spirituality

I will only briefly describe Gitxsan worldview and spirituality here because it will be dealt with in more detail later in this thesis. In the Gitxsan worldview, everything - people, other animals, plants, spirits and other entities - has power. This power or life force gives all entities an essential sameness. It is a characteristic which makes all entities equal, all deserving of respect. Human beings are not separate from nature and humans are not categorically different from spiritual entities. This power is called *daxgyet*.

Although not practiced as vigorously as in the past, many Gitxsan work to increase their power, their *daxgyet*, by *si'setxw* - purification through fasting, bathing, medicinal plants, sweatlodges, praying and other means. People who have gained additional power from a *laxnox* (a spiritual entity), are said to be *halait* (Guedon 1984a, 1984b). When a Gitxsan person uses the term "*halait*" they usually mean a shaman, but a shaman is more properly *halaid'm swanaswx*. Chiefs with *laxnox* names (spirit power names) and members of the secret or dancing societies are also said to be *halait*. The power of the *halait* is qualitatively different from the power that we all have. The last of the Gitxsan *haliats* (shamans) died in the 1960s in Kispiox and the dancing societies no longer exist, but chiefs are often *halait* and *halait* performances can still be seen at feasts.

Reincarnation

The Gitxsan believe that everyone is reincarnated, usually within the house. Each house is seen as having a stock of souls which are reincarnated over and over in each generation. Nearly all Gitxsan know from whom they are reincarnated. There are many ways that the former identity can be recognized, such as by dreams, birthmarks, memories and other means (Mills 1994). The Gitxsan belief in reincarnation contributes to a very long term view as past, present and future continually cycle. In the Gitxsan view, each individual has always been here and always will be.

The worldview and spiritual system of the Gitxsan and the other Tsimshian-speaking peoples seems to be very similar.

The Effects of European Contact on the Gitxsan

The earliest effect of European contact may have been the spread of introduced epidemics which raged throughout North America along trade routes, often before direct contact was made (Boyd 1985:5; Brody 1987:80, 97; Dobyns 1983:8; Thornton 1987:63). Also before direct contact, and along the same trade routes, came trade goods introduced along the Grease Trails from the Wet'suwet'en, Babine, Sekani and others who were involved in the land-based fur trade before the Gitxsan (Ray 1987:28). At the same time, trade goods entered Gitxsan territory by the Skeena River route from the Tsimshian who had been involved in the maritime fur trade since the late 1700s. (Ray 1987:28-9). It was not until the 1820s that the Gitxsan had direct contact with Europeans at Fort Kilamars in Babine territory (Ray 1987:6). In 1825 William Brown, a Hudson's Bay Company trader, became the first European to set foot in Gitxsan territory (Ray 1987:13). He tried unsuccessfully to take control of trade in the area, finding the Gitxsan and their neighbours to be astute traders who would not always agree to the terms offered (Ray 1987:33). It was not until the late 1860s that European settlement actually began in Gitxsan territory when trade was established at Hazelton (Halpin and Seguin 1990:281).

During the early 1870s there was a small gold rush in the Omenica northeast of Gitxsan territory. This brought a number of miners into the area who continued to prospect the area for several years (Halpin and Seguin 1990:282).

In 1879 Robert Tomlinson began the missionization of the Gitxsan at Kispiox with other missionaries soon following. The missionaries worked hard to eradicate many aspects of Gitxsan culture, but had little success in some areas. The Gitxsan began to adopt European names in addition to their Gitxsan names; they began wearing European clothing; adopting European housing and formed elected village councils under missionary influence (Inglis *et al* 1990:285), but Gitxsan social structure remained intact, the traditional economy continued and Gitxsan spiritual practices continued.

By the 1880s the governments of Canada and British Columbia began to enforce their authority over the Gitxsan and their lands. During this decade the rule of Canadian law began to be enforced in Gitxsan territory. One aspect of this was the designation of village and other highly used sites as reserves. This was accomplished over the protest of the Gitxsan. At Kispiox, protesting villagers captured a surveyor who was eventually released to flee down river (Duiven 1986:117-8).

It was in the 1880s that a law prohibiting the potlatch was first framed, but it was not enforced in Gitxsan territory until the late 1920s. The law had little effect on Gitxsan potlatches; they continued unabated throughout all the years of the prohibition (Cole and Chaikin 1990:173-4). Even the biggest and most important kind of potlatch continued through the ban, as is evidenced by the poles which were raised during this time period, each of which requires a series of potlatches.

In 1876 the first of a number of canneries was established near the mouth of the Skeena River. Although this was in Tsimshian territory it was to affect all of the Tsimshian-speaking peoples as they traveled to the coast in large numbers to work in these canneries (Newell 1993:53). This was a pattern which was followed until the 1970s when there was a considerable downturn in the number of people, especially aboriginal people, involved in the salmon fishery (Newell 1993:155; Inglis *et al*. 1990:287). Some Gitxsan fishers continue to travel to the coast for commercial fishing every summer (Harris 1997:69).

In the 1950s, the industrial logging industry began to heavily impact Gitxsan territory. Initially it provided high-paying seasonal work for Gitxsan men, although some Gitxsan were unhappy about their territories being logged. Since the mid-1970s, the forest industry in Gitxsan territory has rationalized and become more heavily capitalized, pushing many Gitxsan out of the industry. The forest industry continues to provide employment for a number of Gitxsan. Some Gitxsan houses, especially those of the Eagle Clan or Kitwangax, are attempting to undertake economically viable but sustainable logging which protects the other values the Gitxsan consider the forest to have (pers. com. Art Loring).

Although western education of the Gitxsan began with the arrival of the missionaries, it did not make serious in-roads into Gitxsan culture until the 1960s or later. It was not until well into the 1970s that Gitxsan children stopped learning Gitxsanimx as their first language. Some Gitxsan children went to residential schools, but the majority went to Indian Day Schools. Today most Gitxsan children attend band-operated schools or provincial schools which have considerable Gitxsan input.

It was also in the 1960s that government social service agencies began to become heavily involved in the lives of the Gitxsan. Like other aboriginal people in Canada, the Gitxsan fell victim to the "60s scoop" where large numbers of aboriginal children were removed from their homes and placed in white foster homes, primarily for the purpose of deculturation. Part of the government involvement of this era involved transfer payments in the form of unemployment insurance benefits, pensions and social assistance.

In the late 1960s there was a revival in cultural pride which took several forms from the political to the artistic. There was a revival of traditional arts, with the focus primarily at 'Ksan, a reconstructed winter village, which is a cultural centre, museum and art school.

In 1968 the Gitxsan, with their Wet'sewet'en neighbours formed what was initially called the Gitksan-Carrier Tribal Council. The tribal council was formed from Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en bands, which although they approximate the village structures, are Department of Indian Affairs constructs. After a number of years, the tribal council was dissolved and the Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en returned to a more traditional type of organization of houses and hereditary chiefs. It was the houses which laid claim to their territory in the landmark land title case, *Delgamuukw v. the Queen*. The statement of claim was made in this case in 1984 and was fought to the Supreme Court of Canada where the Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en received what they consider to be a very favourable decision regarding their land title. Negotiations with the province and federal government continue.

Although the Gitxsan have seen many changes in their lives since European contact, they have maintained many aspects of their traditional culture. They may have stopped living in the large cedar feast houses by the second decade of the twentieth century, but the houses as kinship units continue to function. The village where one's house dwelling used to stand is still considered to be home and is where a person will be returned for burial no matter how long he or she has lived away. The houses are still the land-owning units and take care of their own social and economic interests as much as they are able to in a colonial situation. House property in land, fishing sites, *adaa'ox*, crest, songs, *et cetera* is still carefully protected by house members. It is still considered essential by the Gitxsan to be able to validate property ownership by recitation of the *adaa'ox*.

Chapter 5

Indigenous Knowledge, Worldview and Ways of Knowing

Indigenous and Western Views of History

I once listened to my mother-in-law, Antgwulilibiksxw, Mary Johnson, tell her *adaa'ox* for six days and she assured us that this was an abbreviated version. She prefaced her long and detailed telling of her family history by registering her disgust at the western concept of "prehistory" which proclaimed most of what she was about to tell us was not history because it was not validated by western methods. What Mary was telling us that day is what this dissertation is about - that the Gitxsan and their relatives have a remarkable historical record which is of profound importance to them and which is nearly always dismissed by the western academy or said to be something other than it is. In denying the oral historical record of the people's possession of their lands, the West is able to claim to have discovered that land and to have taken possession of it. That message is perpetrated in school history texts which begin telling the history of the country with the first European "discoverers." Europeans get to decide what counts as history, to teach that view to children (indigenous and non-indigenous alike) and to dismiss other views of history. According to Linda Smith, "The negation of indigenous views of history was a critical part of asserting colonial ideology, partly because such views were regarded as clearly 'primitive' and 'incorrect' and mostly because they challenged and resisted the mission of colonization" (1999:29). To retell history, as I am attempting to do in this thesis, is to move towards decolonization. In order to be able to take that step an understanding is needed of the differences in western and indigenous worldviews which have resulted in these divergent perspectives on how the past can be known.

The following section will explicate indigenous modes of thought, causality, and ways of producing knowledge in the study area and in other parts of the indigenous world. I will begin with some generalizations on indigenous worldview and ways of knowing, provide some examples from indigenous cultures outside the study area and then provide a more detailed description of Gitxsan perspectives on these matters.

In indigenous societies, learning is an integral part of life as opposed to the western way of compartmentalizing education into disciplines and decontextualizing education by removing it from the sources of knowledge to the classroom. For indigenous peoples, learning takes place during the course of daily activities, as does teaching. To indigenous people, to live is to learn. Antgwulilibiksxw, once said to me, "I am seventy-six years old and I am still learning. I will learn every day until I die."

Indigenous peoples learn by direct experience. As each piece of knowledge is obtained it is integrated into the existing body of knowledge held by the learner and it is shared with others to be incorporated into the body of knowledge held by the community. Indigenous knowledge is not paradigmatic, each new piece of knowledge has the ability to add to or alter the body of existing knowledge incrementally.

Indigenous peoples often recognize that their ways of knowing are a direct consequence of their worldviews. Kawagley elucidates differences in western and indigenous styles of creating knowledge. He says,

> The Western (worldview) is formulated to study and analyze objectively
> learned facts to predict and assert control over the forces of nature, while the Native is oriented toward the synthesis of information gathered from interaction with the natural and spiritual worlds, so as to accommodate and live in harmony with natural principles (1995:89).

The purpose of traditional education is to make each individual a functioning member of society. Kawagley says (1995:24), "The foremost purpose of traditional education was to ensure that the principles or rules for constructing a cognitive map for life were learned well by all people." The continued existence of indigenous societies indicates that the educational function was successfully fulfilled.

The worldviews and ways of knowing of a number of North America indigenous cultures have been made available to academia in recent years (Battiste and Henderson 2000; Beck *et al.* 1990; Cajete 1994; Holmes 1996; Kawagley 1995; Ortiz 1969). The body of literature elucidating an emic perspective of indigenous worldview is growing.

In one of these presentations of indigenous worldview, Cowlitz, Rudolph Ryser, discusses the fundamental mode of thought of the indigenous people of the Western Hemisphere. He calls it Caurto Spirilism, and he calls the fundamental mode of thought which arose in Western Europe in the sixteenth century, Progressivism. The primary characteristics of the indigenous mode of thought, according to Ryser, includes the conception of the interconnectedness of all life; perpetual movement of all through space and time; connection of the past, present and future; life and death as aspects of the same thing; and wholeness and particularity as aspects of existence (1998:21).

Probably the most central and wide-spread tenet of indigenous worldview as explicated by Ryser and others is the belief that man does not have dominion over the earth as in the conventional western view, but that humans are an integral part of nature, no greater or lesser than all the other parts. Statements of that principle can be found in literature pertaining to many indigenous cultures. Gitxsan chief Delgamuukw said, "The land, the plants, the animals and the people all have spirit - they all must be shown respect" (Gisday Wa and Delgam Uukw 1989:7). A Wet'suwet'en woman, Gloria George said, "we make no fundamental distinction between the physical and spiritual domains. Both are part of one reality...This unified perspective extends also to the animals and people - being one they are both 'people' "(George 1977:4). Stoney chief, John Snow expressed it this way: "we were part of and related to the universe" (Snow 1977:3). Alfonso Ortiz, Tewa anthropologist said "Not just the human but the entire biotic community is related" (Bosveld 1990:77). Vine Deloria, Lakota stated, "At the bottom of everything.... is a religious view of the world that seeks to locate our species within the fabric of life that constitutes the natural world, the land and all its various forms of life" (Deloria 1994:1-2). Although from distinct cultural and geographic areas of North America, these indigenous people have expressed a similar view of the living state of the universe and the equality of life forms.

There are numerous examples of a similar worldview found among indigenous peoples outside of the Americas. Hawaiian educator, Manu Aluli Meyer stated, "All of life is alive and filled with meaning. Such is a Hawaiian sense" (Meyer 1998:39). The fundamentals of Maori worldview are explained by Roberts and Wills: "everything, animate and inanimate, is connected together into a single 'family tree' or 'taxonomy of the universe'" (1998:45). They go on to say, "there is no distinction or break between the cosmogonic and the anthropogonic *whakapapa* (genealogy or lines of descent), so that everything living and non-living shares descent from the same ancestral, and ultimately divine, primal origin" (1998:46).

Because of this holistic view of the universe, for indigenous peoples, the concept of objectivity is absurd. All elements of creation, including the observer, are continuously interacting and unavoidably affecting each other. Hawaiian, Manu Meyer says (1998:38), for Hawaiians, "The very definition of objectivity is in question." Yupiaq, Oscar Kawagley (1995:33) claims, "you cannot exclude the consciousness of the human observer."

A related tenet in indigenous worldview is that all elements of creation have a spirit or life force. This life force is common to all including things which westerners would see as inanimate. In the indigenous worldview there is generally no distinction between animate and inanimate, therefore, people are actually part of the land. Pierotti and Wildcat would say that this is a result of a profound understanding on the part of indigenous people of spiritual and physical aspects of trophic dynamics, the cycling of environmental elements (1997:95). To validate their connectedness to their lands is possibly the prime reason why the Tsimshian, Dene, Tlingit and other peoples of the study area deem it essential to relate the history of their relationship with the land to the beginning of time as they know it.

In their discussion of traditional knowledge, Wolfe, *et al* (1992:14) point out that indigenous people see a world which is alive, infused with spirit, and that they "see a landscape of far greater detail and complexity" than do westerners. This perception of reality, seeing all aspects of the universe as alive with spirit and will, accounts for the differing explanations of some phenomena which are recorded in the *adaa'ox*. That which is described as a landslide by western science (Gottesfeld and Gottesfeld 1986) is perceived as a supernatural grizzly bear to the Gitxsan (Robinson: 1962:21). A mud and debris slide explained by western science to be the result of natural causes (Mathewes 1987) is considered by the Gitxsan to be the result of the mountain goats taking revenge on the people for abusing them (Barbeau 1929:80).

The indigenous worldview which sees all elements of creation as essentially the same, having the same kind of spirit and power, results in the belief of the peoples of the northern Northwest Coast (and many other indigenous peoples) that all beings - bears, salmon, mice, plants, *et cetera*, are also people. Because of their essential sameness, human people and animal people are relatives able to communicate, marry each other and, even, transform into each other.

I will now provide an example of indigenous worldview from a culture outside of the study area, namely, that of the Yupiaq of Alaska. According to Yupiaq scholar, Oscar Kawagley (1995:15), the Yupiaq philosophy is epitomized by a word with many meanings. That word is *ella*. *Ella,* in its variations, can refer to weather, awareness, world, creative force or god, universe or the sky. The essential element, according to Kawagley (1995:15) is awareness or consciousness. By means of their *ella* the Yupiaq were able to develop values and traditions which enable them to sustain their ecological worldview in which humans, the environment and the spiritual world are interrelated (Kawagley 1995:15). The Yupiaq traditionally based their philosophy and lifeways on maintaining a balance between these elements, disturbing the environment as little as possible, and performing rituals and ceremonies to help maintain the balance and to receive messages from nature and the spiritual realms (Kawagley 1995:15). Kawagley says (1995:9), "Native people cannot put themselves above other living things because they were all created by the Raven, and are all considered an essential component of the universe."

Kawagley, (1995:33) discusses Yupiaq ways of knowing. He says that the Yupiaq view of the interconnectedness of every element of the universe is so profound that the consciousness of the human observer cannot be excluded in learning about the world. In other words, the Yupiaq cannot conceive of the scientific idea of objectivity because it is impossible for the observer to be removed from the subject. The concept of "observer" cannot really exist in this kind of worldview because it denotes a separation from the "subject" which cannot occur in a world in which everything is conceived of as interacting. Kawagley says (1995:18), "The person is always a participant-observer."

In the Yupiaq view, it is not only within the physical world that there is interaction. According to Kawagley (1995:11), Yupiaq learn by synthesizing information from both the natural and spiritual worlds, integrating it by means of their human nature. He says, (1995:33), "Yupiaq knowledge was based on a blending of the pragmatic, inductive, and spiritual realms." They learned by asking questions, extensive observation, experimenting, memorizing data, and applying data to explain natural phenomena in a way which minimized conflict between science, nature, and spirituality (Kawagley 1995:84).

Another excellent example of elucidation of an indigenous worldview is the Maori worldview as presented by Roma Mere Roberts and Peter Wills (1998). These scholars demonstrate that the Maori system of knowledge can be put on an equal footing with academic inquiry into the epistemology of science (Roberts and Wills 1998:43). According to Roberts and Wills, western science is not universal and value free as is so often claimed (1998:44); the Maori conception of *whakapapa* is an equally valid way of conceptualizing relationships in the universe (1998:45). *Whakapapa* refers to genealogy or lines of descent somewhat like the Linnaean system of biological classification in western science but which includes everything in the universe to create a "taxonomy of the universe" (Roberts and Wills 1998:45). According to Roberts and Wills the articulation of the two knowledge systems, Maori and western, is an inescapably political task because of conflicting claims about what should be considered knowledge in an unequal situation of power (1998:43).

Manu Aluli Meyer (1998:38) enters the debate concerning competing epistomologies with her Hawaiian perspective. She claims that "traditional" western academics "defend a mono-empirical view of the world where empiricism is not culturally defined." She says others, especially indigenous people, dispute this view of reality and are working to broaden the philosophy of knowledge to include the distinct views of empiricism produced by other cultures. In this "crisis of reason" Meyer contends (1998:38), the very definition of objectivity is being questioned. She claims that scientists can be an insular group ignoring the facts, logic, metaphors and stories which are necessary for complete human reasoning. Those who oppose a widening of the definition of empiricism, according to Meyer (1998:38) are "labeling the movement anti-intellectual, biased, emotional, feminist and multicultural." She claims (1998:38) that the American education system attempts to homogenize the views of Hawaiians by working under apolitical and acultural assumptions of oppression and power.

To counter the argument of the universality of the western worldview, Meyer elucidates the Hawaiian view of empiricism, saying (1998:39), that in addition to the five senses acknowledged in the western perception, Hawaiians believe there are other senses or ways to apprehend knowledge as well. These include *akaku,* a vision when one is awake; *hihi'o*, a vision or dream just before one sleeps or just as one awakens; *ulaleo*, supernatural voice or sound; *'ili 'ouli*, skin signs like goosebumps, chills, numbness; and so on. Such experiences during waking and sleeping are considered empirical in the Hawaiian view (Meyer 1998:40). Observable phenomena and supernatural ones together, in the Hawaiian view, explain the world (Meyer 1998:40).

Meyer does not claim that biological mechanisms of perception are not universal but it is the socially defined organization of the perception of what is relevant that is culturally specific (1998:39). She counters the argument that indigenous beliefs are nothing more than superstitions by saying that beliefs begin with concrete observation which are then interpreted in a systematic way and recorded as knowledge.

Worldviews and Ways of Knowing of the Gitxsan and Their Relatives

Indigenous or traditional knowledge systems, like those of the Gitxsan, evolve when a people lives for a long period of time in the same place. The peoples of concern to this study have had a particularly long period of time to work out their adaptation to their land and to develop a body of knowledge for making sense of their world. Their oral histories indicate that the ancestors of the current aboriginal residents of northwestern North America have been living in their territories since the end of the last ice age and in the case of glacial refugia, possibly even longer. The archaeological evidence concurs that there is cultural continuity between the people of today and the people of 10,000 years ago. Carlson states, "Distributional correlations noted between some of the early cultural traditions and the language groupings of the historic period suggest that these early cultural traditions were borne by the ancestors of the historic peoples and that there has been long continuity and in-place development of culture" (1990a:68).

That the worldviews of the peoples of the study area are essentially the same in spite of cultural, environmental and linguistic differences is indicated by Gisdaywa, a

Wet'suwet'en of the Dene language family, and Delgamuukw, a Gitxsan of the Tsimshian language family, speaking as one on the issue of worldview. In fact, many of the basic ways of perceiving reality are common among indigenous peoples across North America and beyond, although that indigenous worldview is fundamentally different from that of western society. Gisdaywa and Delgamuukw clearly enunciated their shared worldview and the differences between it and that of the western world. They wrote in regard to the Delgamuukw land title action:

> The Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en worldview is of a qualitatively different order.
>
> There is a natural tendency....to look at Indian societies using a model of the world that derives from Western concepts of the nature of the world and society. The dangers of this are that what Indian people say and do is either not understood or is distorted into shapes and concepts which deprive Indian societies of their essence (1989:22).

Delgamuukw and Gisdaywa explain that the Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en see people, other animals and spirits as essentially the same, all interacting equally in the world, all capable of causing events which affect the others. They say that the past is not over but directly affects us, now and in the future, and that the belief in the reincarnation of people and animals is part of that cyclical perception of time.

Gisdaywa and Delgamuukw go on to discuss western perceptions of indigenous worldviews, saying:

> Such a view would not be regarded as "scientific" and such attribution of events to the powers of animals or spirits would be characterized as "mythical". Both of these adjectives would imply that what Indian people believe is not real, or, at least, if it is real for them, it represents primitive mentality, pre-scientific thinking, which is to say "magic". On either basis, Indian reality is denied or devalued. Their history is not real history but mythology. The binding rules which determine how Indian people should relate to animals are not real laws but primitive rites (1989:23-4).

The traditional worldview dicussed by Delgamuukw and Gisdaywa is still very much in place among the Gitxsan. The degree to which it remains in place among individuals is largely a function of age and degree of exposure to western culture and education. Even the youngest Gitxsan maintain some aspects of the traditional worldview which outsiders might find surprising. One of the most obvious examples is the Gitxsan belief in reincarnation, which is probably universally held by them. Most Gitxsan know from whom they are reincarnated, even young children, although this belief is not readily admitted to outsiders because the Gitxsan understand that most westerners will ridicule them for their belief in what westerners see as superstition. The belief in reincarnation assumes a whole set of related beliefs which conflict with those held by most westerners. These include the perception of time as cyclical rather than linear, belief in a spirit or soul which endures the death of the body, the transposable nature of material and spiritual substance, and so on.

In common with many other indigenous peoples, the Gitxsan see the universe as alive. They believe that every element of the universe has a life force or power which they call *daxgyet*. The Gitxsan do not believe in accident, they believe there is a cause for everything that happens. They believe that, to a very considerable degree, one creates one's own destiny. The way by which a Gitxsan creates a positive life is by living in the correct way which increases his or her *daxgyet*. If one has great *daxgyet* his or her life will go very well. He or she will be healthy, prosperous, well respected and will rarely encounter "misfortune". *Daxgyet* is often poorly translated as "luck" which is a concept which cannot exist in a worldview in which everything is believed to have a cause. Nothing is fortuitous in the worldview of the Gitxsan as in the concept of luck.

The Gitxsan believe that ones' *daxgyet* is affected by the way others are treated. In the Gitxsan worldview, every element of creation has a common life force which is shared with all, including humans, therefore, all have a fundamental equality. Because of that fundamental equality, all things are deserving of respect and must be treated well. Delgamuukw said, "The land, the plants, the animals, the people all have spirit - they all must be shown respect" (Gisday Wa and Delgam Uukw1989:7). If one was to treat an animal, plant or other thing/being disrespectfully by killing it for no reason, by not using all of that which is killed or by speaking badly of it, one endangers one's self because *daxgyet* is reduced, opening the offender up to all kinds of potential physical and spiritual dangers.

The worldview of the Gitxsan is so distinct from that of westerners that many things which westerners would consider not to exist or would consider extraordinary, are considered ordinary by the Gitxsan, or, at least, unusual but knowable. Reincarnation, previously discussed, is one such phenomena. Others include visits (taking many different forms) by deceased relatives or friends; premonitions of impending events, especially deaths; encounters with "supernatural" beings; healing by spiritual means; and so on.

Because of their integrated view of the universe the Gitxsan do not have a concept of "nature" or of the "supernatural." The idea of "man versus nature" or "man above nature" does not exist in Gitxsan reality because humans are a part of nature, equal in importance to other beings but not greater. Likewise the idea of the supernatural - something above nature - because in the Gitxsan worldview, even powerful entities are part of nature. They are just more powerful than ordinary humans, animals, plants and other ordinary entities. All elements of creation can be seen to fall on a continuum of power from the most powerful to the least. Individual humans can change their position on that continuum by increasing or diminishing their *daxgyet*.

Gitxsan ways of creating and transmitting knowledge are shaped by their worldview. For the Gitxsan, education is a lifelong process which is highly valued. The most respected elders are generally the most knowledgeable. The education of a child traditionally began at birth when a child was formally incorporated into the social body in a naming ceremony. A large number of people were responsible for seeing that each child was properly educated and guided through life's stages. The child's parents were his or her primary teachers, but educational roles, sometimes special roles, were held by maternal and paternal aunts, maternal uncles, grandparents, and other maternal and paternal relatives.

Virtually everyone in the community was related in some way, albeit distantly at times, but each older person considered it his or her responsibility to see that all children were properly taught and guided through life. A child and an older, often elderly, person might develop a special bond. In those kinds of relationships the older person might pass much of their knowledge on to the child. For the Gitxsan, the greatest source of knowledge was considered to be oral tradition.

Of course, the Gitxsan regularly learned directly from experience. I have seen how information about numbers of salmon running, their size, condition and location is collected by a number of fishermen who gather to exchange information. The young and middle-aged fishermen usually gather at the home of an elderly chief where the current knowledge is added to the body of accumulated wisdom to make decisions regarding the immediate management of the resource. If something unusual seems to be occurring, the elderly people may describe what happened when similar conditions prevailed in years past. When sufficient information is gathered, wisdom is applied and a decision is made.

When young people take up activities such as hunting, fishing or trapping, they usually begin as children going out with parents or aunts and uncles. The older people will tell young people what can usually be expected and will warn them of possible unusual occurrences. The young person will initially watch the older hunter, fisher or trapper and will assist as they are able, based on age, skills and degree of trust of the teacher. Often by a young age, the student will undertake the activity by his or herself. Typically a young person from an active hunting family will kill his first moose at age twelve or fourteen. Girls may be preparing fish at age nine or ten. Young people who have been taught bush skills as children will usually be well able to undertake some of these activities alone as teenagers. Eventually the student takes over from the teacher, although in many families, hunters, fishers and trappers may continue those activities into old age so that it is not uncommon for three generations to work together.

The Gitxsan, possibly in common with all other indigenous peoples, believe that age and wisdom usually go hand in hand. Wisdom is not seen as being the same as knowledge. Knowledge is accumulated facts, and wisdom is the ability to put those facts to good use. The Gitxsan believe that knowledge and wisdom are usually accumulated together as one learns the hard lessons of youth and is freed in old age from the excessive passions of youth which, at times, make one act unwisely. On a rare occasion, I have heard elders speak of "foolish elders." "Foolish elders" are usually considered to be those who make unwise decisions on behalf of their house members for whom they are responsible. An old person who has not become wise, for example, one who still drinks alcohol, is not considered to be an elder but just to be old.

The Gitxsan believe that one of the greatest sources of knowledge is observation of the natural world. Virtually all Gitxsan are aware of the changes which have occurred in the local environment. Even in a few decades, climate and resources have changed in obvious ways with the warming trend in the climate, decline in fish stocks as a result of the commercial fishing industry and the effects of clear-cut logging. Old people have observed radical changes in their lifetimes and are aware of the changes which were occurring during their parents and grandparents times, this information having been passed on orally. As well as observing major changes in their environment and adjusting their activities accordingly, the Gitxsan also take note of unusual events and store that information for possible later use. If, for example, an animal is seen in an unusual place, in unusual condition or behaving in an usual way, that information is shared and stored. If there is no known recurrence of the unusual event it is set aside as a unique event. If it recurs it is considered to possibly be the beginning of a trend to be watched for.

The Gitxsan continually build their body of knowledge by exchanging information. This can occur very informally when two hunters happen to meet at the post office, it can occur more formally when one hunter seeks out another to tell him what he observed and it can occur formally when a meeting is called to discuss the matter. All of these frequently occur. Although the Gitxsan did not traditionally undertake structured, quantitative studies of aspects of their environment, accurate information was still accumulated and stored in the minds of the people affected. Today the Gitxsan are successfully combining knowledge gathered in the traditional manner with knowledge gathered by research in the western sense.

As well as gathering information by means of empirical observation, the Gitxsan listen to other voices. I find it interesting that the western culture which denies the reality of these other voices has so many names for them - dreams, visions, lucid dreams, hallucinations, visitations, possession, trance, altered states, delusions, *et cetera* - while the Gitxsan, who believe in the reality and power of these voices, have only one name for them - *xwsiiwok̲*. The Gitxsan believe that knowledge acquired from these sources is just as real and probably more significant, than that gathered by the ordinary senses. Knowledge acquired through *xwsiiwok̲* may be even more significant than knowledge from ordinary sources because if the deceased relatives or other powerful spirit beings thought the message was important enough to bring from the spirit world into the realm of the ordinary, it must be important. The kind of knowledge which can be gained from the spirit world of animals spirits, deceased people, and other powerful entities is not gained as often as it once was, because the Gitxsan are not as powerful as they once were. One must be powerful, more akin to the spirits, to be able to receive their messages, especially to actively seek them out. The Gitxsan say that their power, their *daxgyet*, has declined since European contact because people are not living a good, clean life. Few people undertake the activities required to be very powerful spiritually and most people expose themselves to defiling influences which decrease their *daxgyet*.

Although the Gitxsan believe that they are not as powerful as they once were, the lines of communication between the spirit world and the ordinary world are still open. Many people receive at least some messages from the spirit world, some people quite frequently. Knowledge from these sources is combined with knowledge gained from empirical observation of the world and from oral tradition to form the Gitxsan body of knowledge.

Oral tradition is an enormously important source of knowledge for the Gitxsan. Traditionally a large part of one's life was spent receiving and transmitting this kind of knowledge. Children often began the day hearing their elders voices telling stories of all kinds, heard stories throughout the day and ended the day hearing the stories. Very often the stories were *adaa'ox*, filled with historical facts; information about that most important of all subjects - territorial acquisition and territorial boundaries; elucidations of worldview, values and spiritual beliefs; technical data; ceremonial practices and any other aspect of culture which could be fitted into the history being narrated.

In addition to the *adaa'ox*, the *Wii Gyet* or Raven stories were told with their cosmological explanations and moral lessons. Stories of the elders' lives were told - important events eventually becoming part of the *adaa'ox*, less significant events eventually slipping out of the collective family memory. The telling of stories by elders to young people has declined in recent years primarly due to the change to nuclear family dwellings and the separation of children and older people by work in the wage economy and school but it has not ended.

Although elders are generally considered by the Gitxsan to be more knowledgeable than younger people, the information gathered by young people and their wisdom is not ignored. It is recognized that anyone can learn something and contribute it to the body of knowledge held by the community. It is also recognized that some young people are wise beyond their years and may have good opinions and make wise decisions. A young person may seem especially wise because they were reincarnated from a very wise elder and retained some of that wisdom into the next life. Today the knowledge of young people can be especially important because they are the ones most likely to be exposed to western education and most likely to be able to interact wisely with the outside agencies which have so much power over Gitxsan lives. The position of chief's heir may have been strengthened by interaction with western society, especially governments and governmental agencies, because the chiefs and elders who once made most of the decisions on behalf of their house are now forced to rely more upon young people who have greater understanding of outside agencies.

Young people who combine traditional knowledge with western knowledge are best able to mediate between the opposing worldviews which so often bring the Gitxsan and Canadian society into conflict. These wise young people educated in both systems are valuable people essential to the functioning of the Gitxsan nation today. They rely very much on the wisdom of the elders and the elders still make what might be called policy decisions but the younger people are essential as intermediaries negotiating between disparate worldviews.

Indigenous Methods of Validating and Producing Knowledge

The Gitxsan and other indigenous peoples had methods for judging the reliability of knowledge, whether in the form of an oral history or in another form. Oral histories, like the ones of concern in this thesis, could be judged for credibility based on a number of factors. One of these was the storyteller's reputation for integrity and ability to memorize oral histories accurately. As mentioned previously, Mary Johnson was renowned in Kipsiox for her knowledge of oral histories and related kinds of knowledge. Many elders from whom I learned were known in the community as reliable oral historians as well. The reputation of elders of previous generations endured. When I brought to elders the information recorded by Beynon, Barbeau, Duff or others from elders of preceding generations, the reputation of those elders for reliability entered into the decision about how likely it was that the recorded version of an *adaa'ox* was accurate. When elders telling an *adaa'ox* want to emphasize its validity, they may name a respected oral historian from whom they heard the story.

Another method by which *adaa'ox* are kept accurate is by ensuring that only those who have received the proper training tell the story. The storyteller must have the right to tell the story. This right is vigilantly guarded. One earns the right to tell an *adaa'ox* by being a member of a house whose ancestors were involved in the event recorded in the story. The story of that event is passed down through the owning family where every child, but especially high-ranking children, hear the story over and over again throughout their life. Eventually, when an individual has heard the *adaa'ox* enough times, he or she may feel confident enough to tell it. This is often done with trepidation because it is a weighty responsibility to tell one's family history accurately, because so much rides upon it. Those who make a mistake in the telling will be promptly corrected.

Individuals who are not house members are sometimes given permission to tell the history of a house. These individuals would often include the spouse of a house member, the widow or child of a male house member or the widower of a female house member. People in these positions, though their long association with a house, might know the *adaa'ox* even though they are not house members. In a few cases, individuals of extraordinary reputation may be called upon to tell the *adaa'ox* or sing the songs (which is essentially the same thing) of houses to which they are more distantly related. I have seen Mary Johnson called upon in this manner several times.

All of these methods of ensuring the accuracy of the *adda'ox* involve having earned the right to present the information as an "expert" just as a western scholar earns the right to present information through teaching, conference presentations, publications and other means.

Although indigenous and western knowledge generation systems can be compared in some ways, there are many ways in which they differ. One of these is that indigenous knowledge is not considered by those who generate it to be value-free, amoral or apolitical. In the indigenous view, knowledge is not divorced from values, but the purpose of it is to reinforce positive values to ensure the reproduction of society. Just as indigenous knowledge systems do not include the idea that one can observe a phenomenon without affecting it, so, too, do they reject the possibility of being morally and politically neutral on any subject. The political nature of knowledge is, more and more, becoming an issue to indigenous theorists (Dion-Buffalo and Mohawk 1994; Rose 1992; Whitt 1998:146; Yellowhorn 1996:31), as well as to the postmodernists (Clifford and Marcus 1986c; Kremer 1998) and other western scholars who are developing a greater awareness of the political nature of just about any kind of research which involves indigenous people. In my opinion, when western scholars, who are powerful and privileged in comparison with their indigenous research subjects, undertake investigation of those subjects, the research, by virtue of the unequal power relationships involved, is political in nature.

Another keystone of indigenous knowledge creation is that to live is to learn. Education is not a specialization, the domain of experts, but teaching and learning are an inherent part of living. The roles of teacher and student did not really exist in many indigenous societies traditionally. One is both teacher and student nearly all the time. Knowledge is generated by all members of society. This is a reflection of societies which are less hierarchical than western society.

Indigenous knowledge is usually generated by experiential methods rather than by systematic collection of facts. Learning and teaching usually occur through the process of living rather than through a concerted effort to gather facts about a subject. Learning and teaching are processes which are integrated with other activities rather than being specific occupations.

Indigenous knowledge is generated within a spiritual worldview which is soundly rejected by most western scientific thinkers. It may be a universal aspect of indigenous worldviews that all of Creation is considered to be imbued with spirit. I have witnessed the expression of this belief, not only in the Gitxsan community, but in the Metis and Cree communities of which I am a member and in many fora where indigenous people gather. I have heard it expressed in my classes by students who are Tahltan, Salish, Tsimshian, Haida, Carrier, Blackfoot and of other nations. I have heard it expressed at international conferences by indigenous people from Africa, Australia, New Zealand and other places. And I have read it in sources referred to in this dissertation.

Mechanical and chemical processes are often understood by indigenous peoples but these processes are only thought to work because of the spirit motivating them. The physical principles of a deadfall trap are understood by the hunter who makes them, but the indigenous hunter considers there to be more at work than mechanical principles. If one trap catches more animals than another it may be because there is something physically wrong with the trap or it may be because the hunter committed a spiritual offense and imbued the trap with a negative spirit or power. In response, the hunter will be more careful to not kill as many animals or to use all of what he kills. If the trap eventually kills more animals is it because the hunter has reduced the hunting pressure, allowing animal populations to rise, or is it because he has pleased the animals which then reward him by returning to his traps? Either explanation, mechanistic or spiritual works. The result is the same - the hunter once again kills more animals. Both explanations produce knowledge which results in the desired end.

In indigenous knowledge production systems, mind and matter are considered inseparable. Words and thoughts are considered to have the power to make things happen. The Gitxsan and many other indigenous peoples believe very strongly that animals know what one thinks and says about them and how they are treated and that, therefore, one must always be respectful of them. Kispiox elder, Percy Sterritt, Wii Baxw, told me an amazing story of watching a young woman, who was training to be a shaman, walk on fire in her bare feet. Shamans of old were said to have the power to teleport themselves or objects. All of these are considered impossible from a viewpoint which considers mind and matter as largely distinct.

In the predominant western system of knowledge creation, intuition is not considered a valid method for constructing knowledge. Research grant applications which cite intuitive rather than rational methods are unlikely to be funded. In indigenous societies, on the other hand, intuition or “feelings” are thought to have a source or foundation and, therefore, should be heeded. The source might be a message from the spirit world, from the animals or from deceased relatives, all valid sources of knowledge within a worldview in which spirits and humans are not entirely distinct, humans and animals can communicate and in which the living and dead are not entirely separated.

Another way in which indigenous knowledge differs from western knowledge is in its qualitative nature. In the traditional western knowledge system, data which can be quantified is considered the most accurate and reliable. Indigenous knowledge is not often quantified. Indigenous knowledge is most often considered in qualitative terms. Quantifying natural phenomena in absolute numbers is usually considered, not only impossible, but pointless as well. Trends are considered much more important. Declining numbers of a particular resource indicate that less use should be made of it, while increasing numbers indicate that it is probably possible to use the resource more intensively.

Indigenous knowledge is holistic rather than reductionist. In a world where everything is believed to be interacting and affecting each other, phenomena cannot be considered in isolation. It is believed that the sum of the parts is not equal to the whole but that it is greater. Indigenous reasoning is usually deductive rather than inductive. A knowledge of the parts does not provide an understanding of the whole. The purpose of an entire phenomena must be understood before the parts that make it up can be understood.

Indigenous peoples with oral cultures collect and record information differently than literate western societies. While information is collected primarily through observation and interaction, it is sometimes acquired through experimentation. An example of such experimentation was related to me by David Harris recently. While salmon fishing at Gis'ga'ga'as Canyon during the summer of 2000, he found there wasn't enough fishing holes for the number of fishers. The best fishing holes in the canyon are back eddies where the fish gather to rest before proceeding upstream. David decided to try making his own back eddies by moving rocks into a formation which created a still place on the downstream side of the wall. New fishing holes were successfully created.

The recording of information in indigenous societies is primarily oral, although mnemonic devices are often used. The following sections will discuss the remarkable abilities members of oral societies have in memorization.

Because indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing are very different from western worldviews and ways of knowing, the result is conflicting views of what can be known. The historical narratives which are the subject of this thesis are a prime example of what can be known in an indigenous society that would generally be considered unknowable by western knowledge systems.

Memorization

Probably the most remarkable aspect of the oral histories of the peoples of the study area is their time depth. My work indicates that the earliest stories describe events which may have occurred 11,000 years ago before such datable events as the marine intrusion of the Skeena River valley which peaked at 10,600 B.P. (Gottesfeld 1985:37). It appears that many other stories told by the peoples of the study area took place before the rise of sea level 10,000 years ago. It is not just the peoples of the study area who have an amazing ability to memorize. Indigenous peoples throughout the world have maintained remarkable oral records.

Pierotti and Wildcat (1997) discuss Native American methods for acquiring and transmitting knowledge. They say (1997:95) that knowledge is primarily acquired through careful observation and reflection and that it is "passed on to others through detailed stories, which had to be repeated constantly so that the knowledge would be passed on intact, and future generations would retain the knowledge acquired by their ancestors." This method of retaining information through repeated stories was universally practiced in indigenous societies and was taken to a very high level of proficiency by the northern Northwest Coast peoples. Before I discuss Gitxsan methods of memorization I will provide some examples from other indigenous cultures.

A number of writers have commented upon the ability of indigenous people to memorize and the methods by which they have acquired that skill. According to Milton Freeman, the Inuit have great ability to memorize, gained through practice. In discussing the ability of indigenous peoples to memorize large bodies of information, he says: "Inuit, in common with many traditionally pre-literate societies, train their memories from early childhood" (1979:347). George Blondin (1990:i) describes how the Dene kept oral histories accurate over very long periods of time. He says;

> The duty of storytellers was to tell stories every day. That is why Dene tradition was so complete, as far back as the days when Na?acho - giant now-extinct animals - roamed the world. Since it is difficult to keep track of things if you try to tell a long story from one day to the next, each day's story was complete in itself. These short tales, put together, made up complete stories.

Roberts and Wills discuss Maori ability to memorize and their methods for maintaining the accuracy of oral narratives (1998:50). They say,

> Competing accounts, particularly of tribal history, are judged according to whether they are *tika*, that is validated by reason, precedent, and experience. *Tika* means 'just' and 'customary' as well as 'true' or 'correct,' reflecting a judgement of propriety that goes beyond what is valid and true (*pono*) through belief or ritual ratification. An early European record of dealings with Maori states that the most certain method of prevailing in discourse is to appeal to reason and obtain assent that one's account is *tika*. Correspondingly, at the other end of the scale of truth is *he* which means 'dead' as well as 'wrong' and 'false' and to judge an account to be *he* has dire connotations. Between these two extremes lies *tito* which has a range of meanings from 'invention' to 'lying,'. In such ways knowledge was explicated, put to the test, refuted, revised, or validated according to principles recognized by Maori law.

As with the peoples of the northern Northwest Coast, the Maori utilized mnemonic devices to maintain accurate oral records. Roberts and Wills (1998:53) list some of these devices as poetry, proverbs, place names, song, oratory and recitation. They also describe the visual cues used by the Maori, primarily in the form of carving. The Maori word for carving, *whakairo*, is derived from the root *iro* which means 'knowledge.' *Whaka iro* means 'to make knowledge visible.' The knowledge of the ancestors and the narratives was recorded in the carvings, and in the patterns on the roof beams, walls, cloaks, and facial decorations. String game patterns were also used to illustrate parts of stories.

Roberts and Wills (1998:54) provide an example of the proficient ability to memorize in oral cultures. They describe how a Maori, Tamarau Waiari, testified at a Land Commission hearing in the nineteenth century to establish his tribe's claim to a piece of land by recounting their *whakapapa* (genealogy). The three day-long narrative related the history of his own tribe as well as their histories, linkages and relationships with other tribes. The narrative included over fourteen hundred names and reached back thirty-four generations.

I will now address memorization in terms of the Gitxsan. I will discuss how the peoples of the study area have maintained an extensive oral historical record, and the methods by which it has been passed on. At the same time I must address the issue of why they would want to. Gitxsan elders make it very clear that the primary reason they work to remember these stories is that the land-owning units must be able to tell the history of their territories to validate ownership.

The great apparent antiquity of the oral histories of the study area raises the question of how people are able to remember stories over such a long period of time. It does not seem surprising that people who come from oral societies develop greater memory skills than those who come from societies which depend on the written word. While working for the Gitxsan I found first-hand that even those of us who are accustomed to a literary approach to learning can have an ability to memorize which is far beyond what we would usually imagine. I worked for the Gitxsan for over three years on the genealogical research for the Delgamuukw case during which I recorded (where available) the English name, Gitxsan name, birth date, death date, house, clan, spouse,

spouse's house, parents, siblings, and children for over three thousand individuals. Most of this genealogical information was lodged in my memory. I could state the relationship between people eight generations removed, and relate genealogical links stretching back eleven generations. I knew the clan, house, Gitxsan name, and relatives of nearly every Gitxsan person I met. If I had been told before I began that work that I, or anyone else, had the capacity to memorize that much detailed information I would not have believed it; but after managing that memory feat I came to realize that people who work with memory all of their lives can memorize enormous amounts of information, far more than the little bit of genealogy I memorized. Such feats of memorization are displayed by Gitxsan elders when they relate genealogy, *adaa'ox*, hereditary names, toponyms and other aspects of Gitxsan knowledge.

The Gitxsan and other peoples of the study area recognize that some individuals are more skilled than others at memorization. In Kispiox, my late *hlums* (in-law), Mary Johnson, Antgwulilibiksxw, was widely recognized as being the elder of recent years who was most skilled at memorization. When I interviewed other elders they would often end the interview by saying that was all they knew about the topic and that I should go talk to Mary Johnson because she knew more.

There were methods traditionally used by the Gitxsan to aid in memorization. There were times of day when the mind was thought to be most able to memorize information.

Early in the morning upon waking was seen to be one of those times, so children often awoke to the sound of their grandmother's voices telling stories. Bedtime was also seen as a good time for memorization. The last thing children would often hear at night as they fell asleep was their grandmother's stories. According to David Harris, Xhlex, of the House of Ts'iibasaa, when an elder wanted to strongly impress something in a child's memory, she might tell him something then bite his ear (David Harris, pers. com.). The tradition of daily storytelling has declined because of the separation of the generations by work and school and for other reasons.

Formal situations outside the family where the *adaa'ox* were told included the feast or potlatch. This tradition of telling the *adaa'ox* in the feast still continues to some degree today, but in an abbreviated form. In the past, feasts took place over several days, and there was plenty of time to relate the history of the family putting on the event but today feasts are reduced to one long evening of, typically, six to ten hours, so any *adaa'ox* related are in very short form. The essential purpose is retained, though, in that major historical events in which the ancestors of the feasting house were involved on their land are related. The boundaries of the territory may also be described at the time. The more detailed information which can be found in longer versions of *adaa'ox* such as dialogue, motivations, and technological descriptions may be omitted from the short versions told at feasts today.

Adaa'ox are not just interesting pieces of historical information, but are essential to the proper functioning of Gitxsan society. Land ownership can only be validated by the telling of *adaa'ox*. The *adaa'ox* are also told to resolve land disputes. The feast is not used as a forum to resolve disputes; it is a forum to announce decisions which were made elsewhere. When a house has an important issue to deal with which involves another house, meetings will be held between the concerned houses. Such issues can include disputes over territorial boundaries, fishing site ownership or harm caused by the members of one house to those of another house. I have been involved in such a meeting in Kispiox. The meeting was called because of a dispute over the ownership of a fishing site. The chiefs of each of the concerned houses were in attendance as were the chiefs of other related houses who had information about the history of the fishing site and the dispute. Each chief told what they knew of the *adaa'ox* of the place and the issues of concern in the dispute. The weight of evidence was decided by consensus to favour one house and the matter was considered settled. At a later date the decision was publicly validated at a feast by the guests who served as witnesses.

The Gitxsan often use the analogy of a land registry office when referring to the feast. They say white people register land ownership by writing it on papers which are kept in the land registry office. But the Gitxsan register their land ownership in the minds of guests who attend each feast. In the past only people with ranked names attended feasts to witness the business. Today even more people attend. Most adults and many young people in the community attend feasts. Every time a house puts up a feast, describing their territory and telling their *adaa'ox*, they are revalidating their land ownership in front of several hundred witnesses.

The traditional method of resolving border disputes between the Gitxsan and other nations by the relating of *adaa'ox* has been used even in recent years. When the Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en were preparing for the Delgamuukw case, the Gitxsan and the Babine attempted to resolve confusion about boundaries in this manner, as did the Gitxsan and the Nisga'a.

The record of the Gitxsan past is not just stored in the memories of the people, but in many other forms such as crests, people's names, toponyms, songs and dances. They utilize these mnemonic devices to aide in the memorization of the *adaa'ox*. One of the most obvious of these devices is the *gyed'm gan*, the so-called totem pole, which is more accurately called a crest pole in English. Each figure on a crest pole represents an historical incident in the history of the family which raised the pole. Elders will often tell younger people the stories related to the crests on the poles. The same crests may also be seen on other objects. Traditionally, crest designs would be represented on many things belonging to each house. They would be painted on moose hide chiefs' robes, tunics and aprons. They would be carved on chiefs' headdresses, storage boxes, bowls, spoons and canoes. Today, crest poles are still being raised, wool chiefs' robes carry crest designs, and people wear vests and other garments to mark their house/clan membership at feasts and other special occasions. Many Gitxsan people wear house/clan crests every day in the form of silver and gold jewelry, jackets and bags.

Gitxsan names have historical reference. The history of some of the lower ranked names has been forgotten, but is usually known for the high ranking names. Sometimes a name and crest can be connected. Often both names and crests relate specifically to the ownership of house territory. I have taken several groups of my students to Kispiox where I show them a crest pole which has a crest whose history I have been given permission to tell. I tell my students a very short version of the history illustrated by the crest which also relates the origin of the name of the chief of the owning house, the origin of their *lim'x oo'y* (ancient historical song) and connects the kinship group to land.

Another way in which the Gitxsan have represented their history is in the names they have placed on the landscape. Gitxsan toponyms usually have historical reference or refer to the use of the location. Kispiox, which is properly called Gitanspaiyaxw, means "people of the hiding place." This refers to a man named, Yal, who fled people he had offended and hid at Kispiox. Gitanmaax, the next traditional village downstream from Kispiox, means "people of the place where they fish by torch light." It refers to story about a woman who had children who were half human, half dog whom she obtained food for by torchlight fishing.

The Gitxsan protect their crests and *adaa'ox* fiercely because they consider them essential to survival. Without the *adaa'ox* and related crests they cannot validate ownership of economic properties. Only those whose ancestors were involved in a historical event have the right to tell the *adaa'ox* and have the right to wear the related crest. The Gitxsan say that if an individual wears a crest to which he has no right, then those who are owners of it can take it from him. The Gitxsan still consider crest ownership important, because they are symbols of membership in a kinship unit which is attached to a particular piece of land from which the people derive their identity and their livelihood, at least to some degree, today. In the past, of course, house members were entirely dependent upon house territories for survival, so validation of ownership by *adaa'ox* and crests was essential to cultural survival. It remains so not only because the house territories are economically important and are considered to be key to the future of the Gitxsan, but because without their lands which are embedded with so many meanings and values, the Gitxsan would cease to exist as Gitxsan.

The Role of Knowledge in Social Reproduction

A number of scholars have commented on the value of indigenous knowledge in the physical and social survival of cultures. According to Wolfe *et al*, (1992:5), all knowledge generation systems seek to answer two basic problems of human existence, which are survival and meaning. Although it is difficult to measure a society's success in finding meaning in life, a number of scholars have pointed out that the success of indigenous knowledge systems has been made obvious by the survival of indigenous societies (Waldram 1986:117; Hunn 1988:13). Freeman demonstrates (1986:31) that activity in indigenous societies which may seem to be exclusively economic may have other purposes as well, primary among them being the reproduction of the social group. Gitxsan oral histories serve this role as a mechanism of economic and social reproduction. Referring to physical resources, Freeman (1986:35) says "Any society which has a profound and continuing dependence on a set of resources for its future as well as present well being, is logically bound to have a strong self-interest in managing those resources in the best way possible." For the Gitxsan and related peoples, an essential part of that system of management is the oral histories which validate their ownership.

The Gitxsan and their neighbours have proven the utility of their knowledge systems by surviving. Their knowledge systems consist not only of ecological and technical knowledge but they also depend upon a complex social ~~structure~~ which insured their biological and cultural perpetuation. The oral histories are one important aspect of this knowledge system. The oral histories have significance for survival because they are used to validate the ownership of territories upon which each kinship unit makes its living. It is the responsibility of the house members, especially the highly ranked ones, to balance their population with the resources on their territory which is precisely bounded and does not change over time. This is considered a delicate balancing act by the Gitxsan and their neighbours which, when done properly, ensures the survival of the family.

While the *adaa'ox* serve as a social mechanism for maintaining a balance between people, land and resources, the Gitxsan have a personal mechanism for maintaining this balance as well. This mechanism in embodied in the concept of *daxgyet*. *Daxgyet*, the power or life force of each individual is earned. It is earned by living correctly within the rules of the society, and it can be earned by actively seeking it by means of purification or by seeking to acquire it from beings of great power called *laxnox*. When one's store of *daxgyet* is great, one will rarely fall ill, rarely fail in an enterprise, rarely have an "accident" or other misfortune. The *adaa'ox* are stories of a family's *daxgyet*. If family members did not live a good life and create their *daxgyet*, they would be unable to maintain possession of their lands and resources. If a family did not know their *adaa'ox*, their *daxgyet* would decrease because they would be uncertain of who they are and insecure in the possession of their property. As with everything in Gitxsan society, *adaa'ox* and *daxgyet* are integrally connected parts of a functioning whole. One piece removed threatens the integrity of the entirety.

Although indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing have worked for indigenous peoples for thousands of years as is indicated by their survival, colonization - intellectual and political - is a powerful force which has made serious inroads into indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing. Indigenous people have been told and continue to be told that their knowledge, values, worldviews and ways of knowing are invalid. This is part of the on-going process of colonization that diminishes the lives of aboriginal people.

Chapter 6

The Colonization of Thought

White Studies

Much has been written about the effects of the colonization of North America. Colonization was once written and spoken of in the past tense with little recognition of the on-going colonization of indigenous peoples. This perspective is declining as awareness has grown among colonized and colonizer alike of the continuing nature of colonialism in our North American political, economic, religious, social, cultural and educational institutions. Some recent writings on colonization have been general in nature, discussing the effects of colonization on the peoples of the Western Hemisphere (Richardson 1989, Berger 1991, Wright 1992). Others have dealt with specific issues of colonization such as residential schools (Haig-Brown 1988); relocation of the Inuit (Tester and Kulchyski 1994), the Sayisi Dene (Bussidor and Bilgen-Reinart 1997) and the Innu (Innu Nation 1995); the anti-potlatch laws (Cole and Chaikin 1990); introduced epidemic diseases (Churchill 1995b; McNeill 1977; Thornton 1987); dams (Churchill 1992a; Berman 1988; Higgins 1987; Michaels and Napolitan 1988); nuclear waste (Churchill 1997; Churchill and LaDuke 1992; Hernandez 1994); militarization (LaDuke 1990; Nietschmann 1987); tourism (Sweet 1990); intellectual colonization (Bird 1995; Churchill 1994a, 1994b, 1995b; Cunningham 1991; Francis 1992;

Johansen and Grinde 1994; Kloppenburg 1991; Noriega 1992; A. Smith 1994); spiritual colonization (Churchill 1994c, 1994d; Deloria 1992; Rose 1992); and the colonization of the remains of our ancestors (Bray and Killion 1994; McGuire 1994, 1997; Pullar 1990, 1994; White Deer 1997). This long list of works and the variety of the issues covered indicates the expansion of scholarly thought on the consequences of colonization.

It is only in very recent years that a body of literature has arisen which recognizes the continued colonization of aboriginal peoples, not only through political, economic and social repression but through the colonization of thought. By the colonization of thought I mean the denial of the validity of indigenous worldviews and methods of forming knowledge and of the knowledge created therefrom. Much of the body of literature pertaining to the colonization of thought is written by indigenous scholars which is to be expected. For non-indigenous scholars to completely comprehend indigenous worldviews would take immersion of many years in an indigenous culture which few westerners, even anthropologists, have the opportunity to do. The body of literature written by aboriginal scholars representing their worldview is small but growing. That this body of literature is small at this point in time is not surprising. It is a measure of the success of the intellectual colonization of indigenous peoples that they are rarely afforded the opportunity to present their perspectives.

One of the most vocal indigenous scholars discussing intellectual colonization is Ward Churchill. In my opinion, one of the best discussions of the topic of intellectual colonization can be found in his article which he calls *White Studies* (1995a). In this paper he claims that the entire education system of the United States, because of its "monolithic pedagogological reliance upon a single cultural tradition constitutes a rather transparent form of intellectual domination" (1995a:246). Churchill contends that within the western education system "currents of European thinking comprise the only really 'natural' - or at least truly useful - formation of knowledge/means of perceiving reality" (1995a:246).

Although western scientists of each discipline will argue from different theoretical perspectives and may be considered radical, liberal or conservative, Churchill argues that they all do so "within the prevailing monocultural paradigm" (1995a:250) According to Churchill, North Americans of non-European background find that "While consciousness of their own heritages is obliterated through falsehood and commission, they are indoctrinated to believe that legitimacy itself is something derived from European tradition"(1995a:250). Ironically, I find myself in exactly that position in writing this thesis in seeking to gain recognition and legitimacy from an institution which is charged by western society with ideological construction. This paradox is the primary reason it has taken me so long to complete this thesis. I had to come to the point where I could accept that this is an unresolvable contradiction with which I must live and to which I must accommodate. It is on this basis that I undertake all of my scholarly activities and upon which I live much of my life.

Over the last thirty years, particularly since the reaction to the blatantly assimilationist White Paper policy put forward by the Trudeau government in 1969 and since the rise of the American Indian Movement of the early 1970s in the United States, governments and educational institutions in North America have become more aware of racism within their institutions and have sought to remedy the situation. One way they have sought to do this is by including indigenous content into educational curriculum. Including indigenous content in the western education system may be valuable, but it cannot offset the effects of indoctrination into a eurocentric education system. According to Ward Churchill (1995a:259-0), "Non-Western content injected into the White Studies format can be - and, historically, has been - filtered through the lens of eurocentric conceptualization, taking on meanings entirely alien to itself along the way." The oral histories of concern to this study are a prime example of this in that they are seen as histories by those whose stories they are, but, typically, are seen as myth, legend, metaphor, children's stories, *et cetera*, by westerners. This distortion of meaning occurs without the awareness of western educators trying to teach curriculum with native content because they are generally unaware of the distinctiveness of the indigenous worldview. For example, several years ago the high school in Hazelton, British Columbia, given direction by primarily white school board members and white teachers taught a native studies course which covered Gitxsan art, "myths" and "legends," dress, houses, canoes and other objects of material culture. At the same time, at the band-controlled Kispiox school, those aspects of culture which were considered important and which were taught included Gitxsan spiritual views, views of nature and relationship with animals and the kinship and authority systems, because worldview and social structure are more important aspects of culture in the view of the members of the society while material culture is considered much less important. Considered in the most positive light possible, this lack of awareness could be considered to be the result of few opportunity for western educators to be exposed to alternative worldviews. Some analysts would not see it so benignly. According to Churchill (1995a:253), "White Studies simply cannot admit to the existence of viable conceptual structures other than its own." The reason for this being that "Eurosupremacist domination depends for its continued maintenance .... upon the reproduction of its own intellectual paradigm." A widespread and true understanding of alternative realities could threaten the firmly entrenched western power structure in all of its institutions.

Even in Canadian university native studies programs it is difficult to successfully present an indigenous view of reality for a number of reasons. Primary among them being that the structure of the institution precludes aboriginal instructors with indigenous worldviews. Many universities will not consider hiring a teacher without a Ph.D. in spite of the fact that they place advertisements which encourage the application of aboriginal applicants. Considering that there are only a few dozen aboriginal people with Ph.D.s in all disciplines in Canada, for any one position available in a university department, there is not likely to be an aboriginal person with an appropriate Ph.D. in the entire country. And those aboriginal people who do manage to get Ph.D.s have obviously become bicultural or they would not be able to complete the degree. It is hypocritical to "encourage the application" of people who do not exist. Academic institutions which truly wish to present an indigenous worldview in the classroom would have to be willing to give credit to applicants with knowledge which has derived from other sources than an academic institution. To refuse to do so makes a clear statement that only the western worldview, western science and western ways of knowing are considered valid. The corollary of that being that indigenous ways of knowing are invalid, fallacious, superstitions.

The physical distribution of resources at many universities between departments often makes it abundantly clear where priorities lie. Departments considered important have sufficient funding and large modern buildings in the center of campus while Native Studies departments are typically found on the intellectual, financial and physical periphery of the university. The ghettoization of native studies department reinforces the perception that "White Studies is valid and important while non-Western subject matters are invalid and irrelevant" (Churchill 1995a:254).

While there may be some areas of indigenous intellectual endeavour which threaten the fabric of western thought and government, I do not believe that the oral narratives of concern to this study are among them, yet vehement arguments are presented by western academics denying what the members of the cultures which preserve these stories see as evident truth. Culture members see these stories as evident truth because they have methodologies for maintaining the historical accuracy of the stories and those methodologies continue to be practiced. Just as western science feels safe to call something a fact if proper methodologies are followed for verifying facts within their framework, so to do indigenous people feel safe to call something a fact if their methodologies have been followed. It is difficult or impossible to verify the accuracy of some of the oral narratives by the use of western scientific methodologies but they can easily be verified by indigenous methodologies. If western theoreticians say that facts can only be verified by western methodologies they are denying the validity of indigenous methodologies, and thereby indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing. To deny indigenous perceptions of reality is to deny indigenous reality. This is a deeply hurtful and life-denying occurrence routinely experienced by aboriginal people. To deny one's reality is to deny the validity of one's existence.

The differences in worldviews between indigenous peoples and westerners can be so great that it can be difficult to come to an accommodation, and the fact remains that westerners hold the power in government, judicial, educational, social and other important institutions in North America. Indigenous people are therefore at the mercy of those institutions constructed upon a western worldview. Recently there has arisen an awareness of these differences in some academic circles, but it is far from being widely recognized. Nor can it be recognized without a major paradigm shift which could threaten the entire structure of western society. I consider this thesis a contribution towards that attempt at increasing awareness of those alternative indigenous worldviews, but the inroads it is likely to make into western ways of viewing the world are likely to be minuscule. The ideological forces arrayed against such alternative viewpoints are formidable. Certainly, it is unlikely that any of my colleagues in the forestry, business management, mathematics or most other departments at the university where I teach will read this thesis or any other presentation of indigenous worldview which will shake their western science-based view of reality.

Although indigenous people in North America are forced to live with it, the entire way in which western education and society itself is organized is antithetical to indigenous ways of thinking, educating and living. The separation of spheres of inquiry in academia and the separation of organizational spheres in society contradicts the indigenous view of the universe as a seamlessly interconnected whole. Every body of knowledge within an indigenous society informs the others. One cannot discuss political organization without understanding economy, social organization, spirituality, history and so on. Sources of knowledge within indigenous societies also inform each other. Instruction by one's parents, knowledge imparted by means of stories, knowledge gained by introspection or from spiritual sources and knowledge gained from the physical world all inform each other. Western society, on the other hand, is compartmentalized into distinct organizational spheres just as the western education system is divided into distinct spheres of inquiry. This encourages hierarchical organization which, some would say, results in racism, colonialism and ecocide (Churchill 1995a; Kawagley 1995). The belief that all elements of the universe are equally valuable and inextricably related is the centre of the indigenous worldview and results in a very different way of creating knowledge and relating to the world and to other human beings.

Appropriation of Indigenous Knowledge

The appropriation of indigenous knowledge to be manipulated and deprived of its original meaning and used as the appropriators see fit is a natural outgrowth of an attitude which considers indigenous worldviews, knowledge and people inferior to western ideas and intelligence. This attitude allows some western scholars to be certain that what the Gitxsan proclaim to be history is, in fact, myth. This attitude also allows such scholars to be certain that they have a right to use, manipulate and profit from that knowledge property even over the express disapproval of those who created the knowledge. Such scholars appropriate, restate or patent indigenous knowledge as their "discovery." Indigenous knowledge is considered by them to be "common property," "part of the global heritage," or "traditional" and, therefore, not private property until a westerner publishes, commodifies and copyrights it. Indigenous people can be legally denied access to their own cultural property when their property is copyrighted or patented by others. This attitude turns objects with meaning, spirit and purpose into commodified objects of art; turns human remains into "resources;" turns cultures into commodities as ethnographic studies; and, ultimately, turns people into commodities.

This commodification of indigenous knowledge, ideas and images Smith calls "trading the Other" (1999:89). Trading the Other is a huge industry which can exist because of the ideological and political superiority the West has gained through imperialism. Much of it, according to Smith, is a trade in fantasy since "it has no concern for the peoples who originally produced the ideas or images, or with how and why they produced those ways of knowing" (1999:89).

Indigenous Critique of Western Research on Epistemological Grounds

A major aspect of intellectual colonization has been the power of western scholars to write what they choose about indigenous peoples with little expectation that indigenous people will "write back" (Ashcroft *et al.* 1989). During the early years of anthropological research, few of those studied were able to read what anthropologists wrote about them, and to respond. More and more indigenous people are now reading what anthropologists and others write about them but the opportunities to respond are still limited. This thesis is one of those opportunities to write back. At considerable length I am going to write back to an article by Ronald Mason. I am responding at such length to this particular article because it is recently published in an influential scholarly journal, *American Antiquity*, and it encapsulates so many of the issues confronted by this dissertation.

For many years indigenous people within their communities have criticized what western researchers have written about them (pers. com., Mary Johnson; the Hopi on Frank Cushing: Ryan 1999:152). Very little of this critique specific to research on particular cultures has ever been published, and western scholars are not often able to read indigenous responses to their work. Many community members who know their own culture and who are able to read what has been said about them are able to critique such materials on factual and methodological bases. In recent years, a body of indigenous criticism has been developing which critiques academic literature on indigenous subjects on epistemological grounds (Churchill 1992b, 1995a; Deloria 1995; Smith 1999).

It is a difficult debate because some western scholars writing about aboriginal subjects are so deeply entrenched in their own dominant epistemology that they are unable to recognize the existence, much less the legitimacy, of other epistemologies. To argue with such individuals is nearly futile because what is being presented is invisible to them. A case in point is the aforementioned paper by Ronald Mason published in *American*

Antiquity. This paper purports to present arguments pro and con for the historicity of oral traditions (history) (Mason 2000). Mason's paper is particularly relevant to this discussion because it represents quite a complete overview of the kinds of arguments leveled against the use of oral narratives as history.

I found reading Mason's paper very distressing for a number of reasons. "Distressing" may seem an odd word to use in an academic discourse to those who believe that academic discussions should be logical and dispassionate, but this only emphasizes the distinction between western academic discourse and indigenous discourse. Where western academic discourse is expected to be objective and impartial, indigenous theoreticians considers this to be an impossibility. From an indigenous perspective, those who claim to be scientifically objective and apolitical in their debates are unaware of or obscuring their political and ideological positions. I believe this is a fair criticism of Mason's paper.

My primary criticism of Mason's paper is that, based on very incomplete understanding of indigenous knowledge, it can adversely affect the lives of real people. I believe the benefit which a scholar receives from writing such a paper does not outweigh the harm it can do to the interests of indigenous people. The scholar gets credit for an academic publication and the indigenous community may find the paper used against them in disputes over lands and rights. Although the harm done to indigenous people in the name of seeking the scientific truth is the most significant reason I have for objecting to this kind of scholarship, I wish to raise other objections here, epistemological blindness being prime among them.

In my opinion, Mason's arguments are ethnocentric, simplistic and dogmatic, which is ironic because he accuses those who support the idea that oral history is a possibility, of displaying those very characteristics. Mason alludes that indigenous historians and their supporters are ideologically dogmatic, as opposed to scientific thinkers like himself, without recognizing his own ideology and dogmatism. He uses terminologies like "pre-scientific" to describe indigenous thought. Such terminologies hark back to nineteenth century anthropological concepts. He indicates no understanding of indigenous worldviews and little of western thinkers who question the epistemological foundations of scientific thought. His belief in the unquestionability of scientific objectivity indicates a total lack of awareness of the epistomologies he criticizes. Mason begins his paper by setting out scientific principles which he insists are universal and the only true source of knowledge (2000:239-240). These principles are not universally held. Indigenous societies have created knowledge and reproduced themselves for millennia without them. Mason goes so far as to say that the indigenous way of knowing is based on "verbal traditions and faith" as opposed to the "empiricism and logical argument" of the West (2000:248). Only the ill-informed, ethnocentric and dogmatic could believe that indigenous societies have thrived for thousands of years without science and logic, solely guided through the millennia by faith.

Mason indicates his lack of familiarity with the material he purports to critique by repeatedly (2000:240, 242, 243, 244,247, 255) misconstruing the work of those who attempt to utilize historical information in oral narratives. He especially singles out Roger Anyon and his colleagues, saying that they contend that "archaeology is of little or even no relevance to Indian adherents of traditional knowledge" (2000:240), that "science occupies the inferior position (in relation to oral tradition)" (2000:242), *et cetera.* Considering the fact that Roger Anyon and several of his colleagues are scientists, are archaeologists, and continue to work as scientific archaeologists this makes little sense. Mason contends that oral traditions are passed on generation to generation "immune from critical questioning" (2000:248) only on exceedingly rare occasions incorporating information contributed from archaeological inquiry. I believe this is an unsupportable assertion given evidence by the fact that hundreds of indigenous communities around North America from the Arctic to the Southwest and beyond have been involved in gathering knowledge about their past from archaeological investigations. What do these communities do with this scientifically-generated knowledge? They add it to what they already know about their past from oral tradition. I would argue, though, that very few archaeologists have made serious attempts to incorporate oral history into their knowledge of the past. Most ignore it completely, believing, like Mason, that it has nothing to contribute to western knowledge of the past. Others give it a cursory examination, then dismiss it. A very few give it serious consideration. Even in the part of the world which is the focus of this study, where there exists an extensive body of oral history of immense depth and breadth, no archaeologist has made serious use of oral history to inform or interpret archaeological inquiry. Some, like Fladmark, Fedje and Hobler, recognize the potential, but none has yet made an effort to incorporate the two kinds of historical knowledge on a significant scale.

Mason then goes on to explicate Jan Vansina's (1985) distinction between oral history and oral tradition in which oral history refers to events witnessed by a speaker and oral tradition refers to stories which have been passed on from previous generations and which are believed to be true renditions of the past (Mason 2000:240). Such terminology *a priori* extinguishes the possibility of oral history as the Gitxsan and their neighbours define it. What Mason calls oral history I would call eyewitness accounts. Oral history, in the Gitxsan definition, is stories which are passed on from generation to generation and which are "true." Although what is true may be perceived differently in each culture, if a story is not true, it is not history but fiction.

Under the heading of "a red herring," Mason flatly dismisses the conception that very distinct languages like Zuni and English are mutually untranslatable. He says this opinion can be contradicted by "millions of fluent bilinguals" (2000:241). I believe these statements are further indications of Mason's deep entrenchment in the dominant western worldview. Fluent bilinguals who speak languages of very diverse cultures like Zuni and English or Gitxsan and English will often say how impossible it is to translate concepts from one language to another. I believe that concepts in one language can eventually be understood by speakers of another language with very distinct cultural origin but not without, sometimes, many years of cultural and linguistic education. I will present an example which occurred during the Delgamuukw trial. It became obvious during my testimony on Gitxsan social structure that the lawyers for the plaintiffs, who had been working for them for several years, undergoing an intense cultural education, did not understand the concept of *wilnadaahl*. They were using the term inaccurately and when I asked them, they said they were unclear about the meaning. When I first encountered the word *wilnadaahl* I asked Gitxsan speakers to explain it to me. Their replies included: "relatives," "family," "people who help you out at the feast," *et cetera*. After several years of intensive study of Gitxsan social structure and history I came to understand *wilnadaahl*. I first had to learn that houses are matrilineal kinship groups which each belong to one of four clans. Each house can relate its oral history going back thousands of years. If one were to hear the complete history of the house, its migrations, divisions and amalgamations over time, one would eventually know all the other houses, Gitxsan and of other nations, to which that house was related. When an individual uses the term *wilnadaahl*, the meaning is taken from the context. It can mean anything from the speaker's house to his entire clan but, never refers to other clans. It may mean the members of his clan who participated in a particular event. It may mean all the houses of the same clan which lived in a village at a certain point in history. It may mean all the related houses which existed at a certain point in history. It may refer to all the houses of a particular clan within the Gitxsan nation, or it could refer to related houses which are now considered Nisga'a or Wet'suwet'en or Tahltan. And on and on. Now, is the simple (from the Gitxsan perspective) concept of *wilnadaahl* translatable? The answer is yes only if the non-Gitxsan speaker understands Gitxsan social structure and oral history in great detail. Other concepts which westerners might consider spiritual or supernatural might be even more difficult to translate needing an detailed explanation of the entirety Gitxsan worldview.

The reason I gave such a detailed illustration of the difficulty of translating concepts from indigenous languages to English (and visa versa) is that Mason's strident defense of translatability indicates his naivete on the subject of indigenous thought. Mason seems to believe that everything indigenous - languages, epistomologies, *et cetera* - can be easily understood by him with very little study. Those who claim otherwise he considers deluded.

A common thread throughout Mason's paper is that he overgeneralizes. He makes generalizations about oral tradition which may be true for some cultures but which are certainly not true for the Gitxsan and other related peoples. One of these overgeneralizations is Mason's insistence that religious belief is an aspect of oral traditions (2000:247). This may be true in some cases, but certainly cannot be said of all oral histories. The majority of Gitxsan *adaa'ox* do not contain even what westerners would consider "religious" elements. Underlying Mason's criticism of oral traditions as religious and, therefore, not historical is the assumption that science (which is true) can be opposed to religion (which is not true).

In another overgeneralization, Mason charges that historical memory "inescapably" erodes over time to the point where it ceases to exist (2000:249). This may be so in societies where maintenance of an oral historical record is not important, but for the Gitxsan and their relatives it is very important, essential for their continued existence as a people. If a people like the Gitxsan can maintain a body of knowledge generation to generation which is essential to their survival - such as an extensive knowledge of food sources, medicinal plants, their political and social system of organization, and so on - why could they not remember in their oral history who the original founders of a particular territory were, and who continued to own that territory over time? To the Gitxsan, such knowledge is as important as knowing how to catch a fish or kill a caribou since without historical proof of territorial ownership one had no right or place to catch a fish or kill a caribou.

Another generalization made by Mason which does not fit the specific case of Gitxsan oral histories is that in which he claims indigenous oral narratives are often characterized by achronicity at most, or they have relative chronologies which are "minimally informative and often manufactured to address current interests" (2000:260). The oral narratives of the Gitxsan and their relatives do not have calendrical dates, but they do have an immutable chronology. The elders of each house can tell their history chronologically through time from the earliest known story to the present. Most of these events involved other houses which would also relate the shared events in their tellings of *adaa'ox*. There are momentous events which occurred periodically throughout the history of the area affecting large numbers of people in many houses. These events are widely remembered and are used as time markers. An elder can tell the story of an event and place it in time by using a time marker which will be known by his audience. If the elder says the event occurred "before the flood," the listener knows the event occurred very long ago. If the elder says the event occurred "after the white man came," the audience knows this is a very recent event. Many other widely known time markers are used to situate stories chronologically. Mason may be right that " 'History' sans chronology is not *history*" (2000:260) but this does not apply to all bodies of oral history as he alleges.

Mason repeatedly makes generalizations which are so broad as to include examples which invalidate his conclusions. As I understand it, it is a fundamental principle of the scientific method that inductive reasoning is never conclusive and that reliability is reduced as sample size is limited. Clearly, Mason's sample is too limited, invalidating his absolute conclusions. I was taught early on in my academic education to use terms like "generally," "frequently" and "often" rather than absolute terms so as not to invalidate my conclusion if even a single contradictory example can be found. Mason fails repeatedly to do this.

Mason contends that oral traditions are not trustworthy because they are dependent upon memory and verbal transmission (2000:242). He claims memories falter and recitation is adapted to circumstance "in a single lifetime and (this) is universal" (Mason 2000:256). He cites evidence from psychology, sociology, ethnography and history. Nowhere in his paper does he discuss methods by which oral narratives are maintained within indigenous societies over time. In indigenous cultures which consider it important to keep an oral historical record, techniques are developed for memorizing. Elsewhere in this thesis I have discussed the methods used by the Gitxsan for maintaining an accurate oral record over long periods of time. Mason contends that members of oral societies have no greater capacity for memory than westerners who depend upon the written word and who do not usually exercise their memories to any great degree. This is not so. Anthropologists and others have commented on the remarkable ability of indigenous people to memorize (Blondin 1990:i; Echo-Hawk 1994; Freeman 1979:347; Roberts and Wills 1998:50). I would even suggest that westerners with untrained memory skills are able to memorize far more than they would believe. I have presented an example from my own experience in this thesis. If I was able to memorize the names of and relationships between several thousand people as well as many Gitxsan language, place names, oral histories and other knowledge of Gitxsan culture in a period of three years, how much can elders memorize who have been trained in memorization all their lives? Certainly more than Mason gives them credit for.

Mason contends that oral traditions are "by nature" more artifacts of contemporary culture than records of the past (2000:242). He alleges that "all of the oral traditions perpetuated in American Indian societies are in fact contemporary commentaries on ancestral actions" (2000:24). Mason says this without acknowledging that the cultures which feel it is necessary to maintain an oral historical record have methods by which they keep this from occurring. There are stories in indigenous cultures which combine the past and the present, or irreconcilable facts such as the delightful Inuit story about Noah hunting a wooly mammoth (Norman 1997: 17-30) or the story Gitxsan elder, Moses Morrison, Gitluudaahlxw, told me about Columbus coming to Prince Rupert, British Columbia. But these stories are not to be confused with ones which culture members consider historical. For the Gitxsan there is a fundamental difference between the *adaa'ox* and the *andamatlaswx*, and the Columbus story Moses told me was an *andamatlasxw* - half way between a joke and a lie. Western scholars often mix these two kinds of stories indiscriminately (Boas 1916; MacDonald and Cove 1987; Cove and MacDonald 1987) which to the Gitxsan is equivalent to contending that a record of the French Revolution and Cinderella are the same kind of story. ...

In contending that myth and history are one in non-literate societies, Mason claims that such stories are created as "charters" to legitimize societies (2000:258, 263). This he opposes to western society with written history in which "the written record is the closest we are ever apt to come to whatever it was that came to be set down in text" (Mason 2000:258). As an indigenous person who lives under the rule of a colonizing society which must go to great lengths to legitimize its possession of the lands and control over the lives of others, it is astounding to me how individuals like Mason can bemoan "the unexamined life" (2000:247) and at the same time claim that his version of history is the accurate one. If the written version of history in North America is the accurate one, why is it that children are not taught in schools about the deaths of millions of aboriginal people in North America by introduced epidemics or about the many instances of systematic slaughter? Could this be because written history is slanted to create a "charter" for the European occupation of North America? Western historiography, social science and, arguably, science, are frequently about slanting the data to present one's version of the facts rather than the facts themselves. The enterprise in which I am presently involved, the writing of a thesis, is about slanting the facts to make a point. I cannot obtain a doctorate by presenting the "facts" no matter how interesting or new to academia. I must argue a thesis. This is how western scholarship is structured. The presentation of history by the Gitxsan and their relatives differs from that of the West. The inglorious is presented probably more frequently than the glorious because it is the tragic which is the most memorable. From very early on in the oral record in the northwest, there has been a strong ethic that dictates that land could only be claimed by original discovery or could be accessed by joining already established relatives and that conquest was not a legitimate way to take possession of land. This kind of land ethic and tenure system does not engender stories of glorious conquest. When some westerners hear Gitxsan *adaa'ox* they may seem pointless because they just record events and have no message. Western versions of Gitxsan stories are often made more recognizable in western terms by the addition of titles that inform the reader what the story is about (Maud 1993) and explicit morals to the stories (Barbeau 1928). I would contend there is less "slanting of the facts" in Gitxsan oral history rather than more.

Mason's epistemological blindness is demonstrated again when he agues that it is an erroneous contention that culture members can know their culture better than outsiders "by right of heritage" (2000:243-4). He calls this "ethnocentric sovereignty" (Mason 2000:243). Mason's dismissal of the claim of culture members to know their culture better than outsiders indicates that he does not question the superiority of objective scientific research over "pre-scientific metaphysics" (2000:244). He is so certain of the superiority of scientific inquiry that he is able to claim superior knowledge to that of culture members. I wonder how Mason would react if a Gitxsan or someone else foreign to western culture claimed superior knowledge of western culture because they had studied it scientifically? I expect he might then present some of the same kinds of arguments presented by indigenous peoples such as superior understanding through a lifetime of lived experience, of inculcation in the epistomology of the culture, of education in the language of the culture, of learning the knowledge creation methods of the culture, *et cetera.*

Mason goes on to say that oral traditions are "subjective," "socially introspective," "*intra*-societally private productions" as opposed to western historiography which is "an objective or *inter*-societally, publically accessible, knowledge claim" (2000:244). Again, Mason demonstrates his epistemological blindness in his failure to recognize that objectivity is an ideal which can rarely be reached in the hard sciences, much less in the social sciences or historiography.

Mason repeatedly opposes indigenous forms of knowledge to science. An argument can be made about whether indigenous people have science or not. If we mean by science, bodies of knowledge which presume positivism, rationalism, dualism and other aspects of western epistemology, then the answer is no. If we mean by science, bodies of knowledge that order human existence and assist people in the systematic gathering of knowledge needed for social survival over time, then the answer is yes. Mason clearly utilizes the narrower definition. He grants indigenous people the right to "participate in a world ordered by pre-scientific metaphysics....unless they presume to work at science" (Mason 2000:244). This statement indicates to me that Mason sees indigenous people as relics of the past. He is willing to allow indigenous people to be scientists as long as they give up their indigenous epistemologies. The reality for most indigenous people today is that they are continually reconciling two epistemologies both of which structure their lives. An indigenous person is perfectly able to work as a biologist utilizing scientific principles **and** to believe that animals and plants have will and intelligence. The indigenous biologist can understand and utilize scientific principles pertaining to the organisms he or she studies while believing that they have will and intelligence. The indigenous biologist is able to work with these two sets of principles just as a western scientist is able to work in a laboratory and go to church to pray to a God who cannot be weighed and measured and is known only by faith.

Mason reinforces his belief in the universal correctness and superiority of western science, specifically archaeology, when he says, "It is not ethnocentric because it eschews the narcissistic, ethnically-unique, quasi-religious character of (indigenous) societies in favor of a universal, culturally transcendental epistemology in principle open to anyone instructed in its procedures" (2000:255). Mason goes on to disparage indigenous societies for their lack of democracy while exalting western society for that characteristic when he says,

> whereas areas of 'traditional knowledge' enmeshed in the 'oral histories' of, say Zunis or Hopis, are off limits to non-Zunis or non-Hopis...., no such proscriptions obtain in scientific inquiry. In polar contrast is the 'open admissions policy' of the universal sodality of archaeology and other sciences. This sodality welcomes Aruntas, Dinkas, Fijians, and all others... (2000:255).

Mason is blind to the fact of the exclusivity of archaeology and other western sciences. A western university education is not only inaccessible to nearly all Aruntas, Dinkas and Fijians, but to the indigenous people of North America and even to the poor of Mason's own society. Previously in this thesis I have discussed some of the reasons, economic, social, psychological, epistemological, *et cetera*, why western education is so unattainable for most indigenous people. On the other hand, the oral narratives of indigenous societies are frequently copyrighted and claimed as the property of anthropologists, linguists and other western scholars.

There are a number of ironies in Mason's comments on the use of oral history in constructing a picture of the past. He chastises his "less reticent" archaeological colleagues saying they should try to understand the reasons for suspicion. It seems likely that Mason's less reticent colleagues have studied scientific archaeology in order to be legitimated as his colleagues and have then attempted to broaden their education by examining other bodies of knowledge while Mason is the one who makes little attempt to understand what they have learned. In another ironic statement, Mason admonishes those who would grant legitimacy to oral history, to question the veracity of "elders" and other informants (2000:261). I would like to know how Mason earned the qualifications to make such judgements.

Mason makes it clear that he has the authority to frame the debate. He contends "If others are not talking about what we define 'history' to be, they are not talking about *history* but about something else" (Mason 2000:255). This kind of argument certainly stultifies debate. It proceeds from another *a priori* assumption by Mason which makes it impossible to discuss the possibility of oral history because Mason has already declared that it is not history but something else. Mason even replies to the retort to his assertions in a derisive tone, saying,

> Today, of course, many question such assertions, arguing that they are an illegitimate privileging of Western values over those of other people, a sort of epistemological bullying of the powerless, an attempt to take over and recast in our own image the culture of others. But this is cant and does little to encourage communication let alone address substantive issues about the nature of cultural history and how we can possibly know it (2000:256).

Although Mason may have been granted legitimacy in his society to make such statements about aspects of indigenous culture and worldview, he has no legitimacy to do so in the eyes of indigenous peoples. We do have the authority to accuse him of "epistemological bullying" because it is obvious to us how frequently his words in this paper do violate our views of reality and how often his absolutist statements close off debate.

Mason specifically critiques the work of Jay Miller on the very *adaa'ox* of which I speak. He ridicules the idea that the Tsimshian could remember events which occurred 10,000 years ago and he ridicules Miller for using "random odds and ends of decontextualized geological and archaeological data ....proffered as corroboration" (Mason 2000:250). Mason makes the pronouncement that Miller's thesis is ridiculous, but does not offer evidence or a convincing theoretical argument refuting it. In this thesis, I offer evidence which makes Millers' claim for a Tsimshian memory spanning 10,000 years less "patently fabulous."

While I agree with Mason that utilizing linguistic, biological, demographic and other forms of evidence can help to legitimize the veracity of oral narratives as history in the eyes of western scholars, I do not agree that this calls for the "lowering of scientific/historiographic standards" (2000:262). What it does require is for western scholars to learn new methodologies developed within indigenous societies. In indigenous systems of creating knowledge, new does not mean wrong, but there is a tendency to believe that in traditional paradigmatic western science.

The Gitxsan and their relatives consider the study of oral history a lifetime occupation. Their oral historical record is so extensive that even an elder who has been learning them for eighty years might only know his own house *adaa'ox* well and know parts of the *adaa'ox* of a few other related houses. Outsiders studying such an extensive body of knowledge must remain humble if they are to have any appreciation of the nature of this knowledge. A Gitxsan who reads a few papers on archaeology can no more claim to be an archaeologist than one who reads a sampling of oral narratives (or interpretations of them) can be called an expert on the subject. I recognize that my understanding of oral histories is minuscule in comparison to that of the elders but, I hope, significant enough to be able to enlighten those who know nothing of them. Mason does not exhibit this humility, but presents an arrogance born of his certainty of the superiority of western science and ways of knowing, and his position as an arbiter of such knowledge.

Potential Specimens Write Back

In recent years, indigenous scholars and others supportive of indigenous perspectives of knowledge, have been producing scholarship which "writes back" to those like Mason who have previously been unanswered by culture members. A vigourous, but I believe, healthy debate, has arisen focusing on an issue raised by Mason, an issue of particular relevance to my work. This debate has been focused on the question of "Who owns the indigenous past" (McGuire 1997). This is not an issue which pits indigenous people against non-indigenous people or archaeologists against non-archaeologists (Zimmerman 1997:47). There are indigenous archaeologists involved in this issue and there are non-indigenous archaeologists supporting indigenous people in this issue. The debate focuses on the issue of how we come to know the past, who has a right to investigate and interpret the past, and to what uses should the knowledge and artifacts from these investigations be put. This debate is an epistemological debate even more than it is a methodological one. This debate has significant implications for this thesis because it centers on epistemological and ethical concerns in investigating the past - two areas of prime importance to this dissertation.

The single most important stimulus for this debate in scholarly and indigenous circles has been the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) implemented in the United States in 1992. Although NAGPRA legislation primarily affects physical anthropologists, archaeologists and museologists, the debate has influenced scholars in many fields as well as indigenous people. And the debate has stimulated discussion beyond the borders of the United States, especially here in Canada.

The debate about ownership of human remains and cultural property began before NAGPRA, of course, and eventually led to implementation of the legislation. Although indigenous people have always resented cultural anthropologists, archaeologists and other researchers intruding into their lives, it was not until the 1960s that resistance became overt and researchers became aware of it. Zimmerman contends, "archaeologists erroneously assumed that indigenous people agreed with scientific constructions of the past or at least acquiesced to archaeological authority on the matter" (1997:46). It came as a surprise to some western academics that indigenous people saw research as an issue of colonization and began attempting to reclaim their past as one aspect of regaining control of their colonized lives. It probably came as a further surprise that public sentiment was on the side of indigenous people regarding the issue of ownership of human remains and objects of cultural patrimony. As a result of this public support, NAGPRA was enacted.

NAGPRA detractors have sometimes contended that aboriginal claims to their ancestors and cultural patrimony are just political rhetoric and with some education they would see the light and allow archaeologists and physical anthropologists to get on with their "sciencing" (Downer 1997:23). Aboriginal people, on the other hand, find it very difficult to understand how scientific curiosity provides sufficient justification for the desecration of the graves of their ancestors (Downer 1997:23). The differences in these two perspectives derive from different perceptions of the past (Downer 1990, 1997; Tsosie 1997; Zimmerman 1997) and fundamentally different underlying worldviews (Harris 1999; Pullar 1994). Supreme arrogance is exhibited by those who proclaim their scientific imperative to study the indigenous past in which ever manner they choose is greater than the moral imperative of indigenous people to defend their deeply held beliefs about protecting their dead and their cultural patrimony from desecration, destruction and theft. As Alutiq scholar Gordon Pullar said, "....if Alaskan Native youth were allowed to believe that it was somehow acceptable for the government of the United States to ‘own’ the bodies of their ancestors, then they would have a very difficult time developing the self-esteem that would permit them to feel equal to all others in this country.” The point I am making here is that respect for the dead, for cultural patrimony and for oral history is not about the past. It is about the present, the living and the future. Colonization and exploitation of people, objects and ideas of the past is an integral part of the continuing colonization of living people. Until those realizations are made by colonizer and colonized alike, nothing will change for indigenous people. Successful colonization involves a program of total eradication and replacement of culture. It is a battle which is fought on many fronts and its undoing has many facets. This thesis is one of my contributions to the process of decolonization.

A significant part of the debate over who owns the past had focused on the protection and repatriation of human remains. The remains of 600,000 Native American individuals may be held in public and private collections (Thornton 1998a:387). Also at issue are funerary objects, sacred objects and important objects of cultural patrimony. By definition, few such objects could have been obtained with appropriate consent. Objects taken with apparent consent from people stripped of any opportunity to make a living, I consider to have been removed under duress. Others, such as Marie Battiste and James Youngblood Henderson (2000:151) agree. Whether human remains and important cultural objects are removed by professional researchers or pot-hunters, it all appears as grave-robbing t[illegible]ctims. The most infamous deprecations are well known. Ales Hrdlicka's removal of human remains (some as little as one year dead) from the Alutiq community at Larsen Bay on Kodiak Island in the 1930s is one such case (Bray and Killion 1994). The logical culmination of this kind of objectification is that living people are treated as objects. One of the most well known cases of such objectification of the living, which I briefly mentioned before, was Robert Perry's 1897 removal of six Greenlandic Inuit to a museum in New York. Four of Perry's living museum specimens soon died. The first to die was Qisuk, the father of Minik. Minik was given a log wrapped in cloth and told it was his father's body. Minik and the other Inuit then performed a funeral ceremony which anthropologist, Alfred Kroeber, was able to study. In fact, Qisuk's body was being dissected and his skeleton mounted and displayed in the same museum in which Minik lived. Minik discovered the ruse and mourned his father's treatment, but was not allowed to bury his father's bones because the scientific imperative was considered greater than the moral imperative (Harper 1986).

Although scholars would no longer display live human beings as Perry did, many indigenous people do not feel things have really changed that much. The remains of hundreds of thousands on indigenous people from North America are still held by museums and other institutions. These remains may be "resources" to physical anthropologists, but they are the remains of loved ones (even if they died long ago and even if their individual identity is not known) to their descendants. Navajo, Rebecca

Tsosie, says, "Until the relatively recent change in professional attitudes, archaeologists perceived ancient peoples as research specimens like dinosaurs or fossils, and claimed that the codes of ethical behaviour that governed European burials did not pertain to the treatment of ancient peoples" (1997:66). The point I am trying to make with this discussion is that the same attitude which resulted in the kind of treatment Minik and Qisuk received, results in the dismissal of indigenous worldview, indigenous knowledge and indigenous claims to their material and intellectual property. Scholars, like Ronald Mason, who refuse to accept as true any knowledge which is a product of a system other than that of western science, and who proclaim the scientific imperative is superior to any imperatives indigenous people might have, are professing deeply imperialist attitudes which I would contend are inherently racist and harmful to living indigenous peoples. Choctaw scholar, Gary White Deer has made this point with crystal clarity saying, "To archaeologists, the idea of consulting with potential specimens must seem annoying" (1997:38). Tsosie concurs when she says, "The outrageous conduct that Euroamericans have displayed toward Native American remains, funerary objects, and sacred objects exemplifies a basic and ongoing disregard for Native American human rights" (1997:67).

Some indigenous people would say that all research involving human remains should stop because disturbing the dead is sacrilegious. I contend that they have a perfect right to be able to protect their dead just as non-indigenous North Americans have the right to expect that the remains of their ancestors will remain undisturbed. Other native people feel there may be value in studying human remains as in the case of the 9,800 human remains found on Prince of Wales Island in 1996 (Dixon *et al.* 1997). In this case the Tlingit, Tsimshian and Haida agreed to the study of the remains as long as they were treated with respect and reburied after a year of study. They, too, were interested in what they could learn about their past from these ancestral remains, but only if it was done in a way which did not offend their spiritual beliefs (Dixon *et al.* 1997:7).

Most indigenous communities in North America are involved in various types of research. Indigenous people are often interested in what can be learned about their past, both by indigenous and western methods. More and more indigenous people are being trained in archaeology, history and other fields which facilitate their investigations of the past, but that does not mean they place the scientific imperative above ethical imperatives as defined by the indigenous community. Russell Thornton charges, "Scholars and others assert that the scientific and public value of the remains and cultural objects outweigh any claims Native Americans may have" (1998a:393). Many indigenous people, scholars and ordinary community members alike, object to this attitude. This thesis is intended to expand upon that challenge. I would say that the West does not have a superior claim to the human remains of indigenous people or to their material culture, and I would also say that the West does not have a superior claim to indigenous intellectual culture. Western scholars have neither the right to appropriate indigenous ideas for their own use without permission, or to summarily and universally dismiss indigenous intellectual products as inferior to their own. Likewise, the argument that indigenous remains and material and intellectual property belong to the scholarly community, the state or are part of the heritage of all people is unacceptable. Western scholars and others protect their intellectual property by means of copyright laws and the concept of plagiarism, yet indigenous property has been considered available for exploitation. Indigenous property is even converted by scholars and entrepreneurs from "public" property to private property by means of copyright law.

The repatriation of indigenous property initiated in the United States through NAGPRA and discussed around the world has great potential for helping to bridge the gap between the native world and the larger society, according to Russell Thornton (1998a:403). The legislation has forced non-indigenous scholars, particularly physical anthropologists and archaeologists, but others as well, to listen to indigenous views on these issues and to come to terms with them. Western scholars may have learned more about indigenous worldview in grappling with this issue than with any other. To understand the differences in the western and indigenous positions on this issue it is necessary to gain an understanding of indigenous worldview. In the best spirit of scientific inquiry western scholars seek to learn why things occur. To understand why indigenous remains and material and intellectual property are sometimes being withdrawn from the realm of scholarly inquiry, it is necessary to learn about the worldview that has prompted that withdrawal. This kind of learning about the most fundamental aspect of a culture requires a profound openness and honesty, especially when what is learned conflicts so directly with what one has always been told was true. Those who take that epistemological leap become true friends and colleagues to aboriginal people rather than promoters of intellectual (and, thereby, political) paternalism and colonialism.

Improving Our Understanding of Colonial Ideologies

During the early years of anthropology, many cultural anthropologists and archaeologists accepted oral histories as a source of legitimate knowledge about the past (Downer 1997:29). Increasingly, through the twentieth century, they came to be seen as unreliable and were eventually dismissed altogether by most western researchers (like Mason) as a source of information about historical events. Downer claims that archaeology became so distinctly separated from living members of the cultures whose past they investigated, that in many of the foremost archaeology programs in the United States "students could go from freshman to doctoral degree without ever actually learning anything about the contemporary Indian cultures in the region" (1997:29). This is true in some Canadian universities as well. This attitude, which developed as archaeology and cultural anthropology became more "scientific," is a deeply imperialist one. It manifested itself in archaeology by frequently denying that current aboriginal residents of an area are the descendants of those who produced the archaeological cultures found there. In cultural anthropology it manifested itself in the attitude in which the anthropologist claimed (either explicitly or implicitly) to understand the culture better than culture members. Some archaeologists even believed that "the Indian past was lost unless archaeologists reconstructed it" (Zimmerman 1997:46). Zimmerman contends it is

> a fundamental epistemological issue in archaeology that there is one correct view of the past and that it can only be known archaeologically. That view causes no end of problems in the archaeological profession's relationship with Indians (1997:53).

If the relationship between indigenous people and western scholars is to improve, both must deepen their understanding of the colonial forces upon which their relationship is based. Because colonialism is constantly reworking itself (Smith 1999:19), indigenous people, as well as their colonizers, must also constantly rework their understanding of it. For me, this thesis has afforded a significant opportunity to refine my understanding of the nature and power of colonial ideology, especially regarding the formation of knowledge. Through this process I have come to the clear understanding that western scientific understandings are not universal, and indigenous knowledge does not have to be validated by wern standards. I see this as an enormous step in the decolonization of my own mind.

Colonization continues, not only in academic debate, but in the real lives and real worlds of indigenous peoples. Linda Smith (1999:19) contends,

> ....imperialism cannot be struggled over only at the level of text and literature. Imperialism still hurts, still destroys and is reforming itself constantly.

As an indigenous person, attempting to remain politically neutral is inconceivable. Those, aboriginal and non-aboriginal alike, who consider themselves politically neutral are advocating the legitimacy of the existing colonial system. As an indigenous academic, research, writing and teaching are only some of the ways in which I present my political position. I also contribute by participating in aboriginal arts and cultural events which help to create a highly visible positive image of aboriginal people. At times, my actions have been more obviously political when I have lobbied government agencies, written letters for publication in newspapers confronting racist views and policies, and when I have participated in "actions on the land" such as road blockades and "fish-ins." Writing is not enough to create justice for indigenous people, but it can be one aspect of a many-faceted approach. It is what I do best. All of these actions as well as these words are my contribution to the deconstruction of any serious consideration of the existence of a postcolonial world.

Colonization is a multifarious system which reaches into every aspect of the lives of indigenous people and of the colonizers themselves. Decolonization, therefore, requires a multifaceted approach. The ideology of decolonization is developing in many fields - anthropology, law, education, social work, health care, the fine arts, environmental studies, theology and other fields. During the research and writing of this dissertation, the most important learning experience for me has been the decolonization of my assumptions about research. During this process I have come to understand the uncertainty of "facts" and the certainty of ideology's affect on perception. I have come to understand how greatly research practices are informed by values. Fortunately, more and more scholars, indigenous and non-indigenous alike, are becoming intellectually decolonized. This new openness to other sources of knowledge can only benefit all who value knowledge. To preclude an important source of knowledge based on preconceived prejudices seems antithetical to scholarly pursuit. By setting aside intellectual colonization and finding new ways to learn the potential is enormous for new intellectual experiences. One such experience is that which can be gained from a study of Gitxsan oral histories.

Chapter 7

The Contribution of Gitxsan Oral Histories to Knowledge

Bias in Western and Indigenous Tellings of History

Although I am writing about Gitxsan understandings from my perspective as a non-Gitxan and a scholar, I am writing as an indigenous person who shares many aspects of epistemology with the Gitxsan and as someone who was a member of the community for many years. In addition, much of this thesis and previous work it was based on has been read and deemed accurate by knowledgeable Gitxsan. Although I can never be sure that I fully understand Gitxsan perspectives, and I am aware that not all Gitxsan have the same perspectives, I believe that what I am writing is a fair representation. Certainly, my interpretation of Gitxsan history has a greater resemblance to that of the Gitxsan than the interpretations of most western scholars. The most important point in this regard being that I believe the Gitxsan when they say that their *adaa'ox* are historical where western scholars usually dismiss their historicity or qualify it.

Western analysts of history, written and oral, often contend that history is always written to tell the story as the teller wants it told (Cruickshank 1998:xv). This may be true, but it may be more true for some kinds of tellings than for others. The written history of North America has been the history of the colonizers. Most of that history has been written with a significant slant - one which justifies the appropriation of the continent from its original owners. North American history has largely been written as a glorification of the triumph of European civilization over savagery. Although treatments of indigenous peoples in some western-authored accounts may have become more sympathetic in recent years, the prevailing historical narrative presented is one in which the western "democracies" are presented as the highest good. From the perspective of the indigenous individual who has suffered unrelentingly in the hands of such democratic states, written history appears to be a great lie.

In contrast to the need to justify the colonization of a populated continent, the peoples of concern in this study, the Gitxsan and their neighbours, have maintained the idea for a very long time that the ownership of land remains with the founders, changing hands only rarely and with the agreement of the original owners. That is not to say that populations did not move. They did, but, with permission, they intermarried and were absorbed into the founding people of a territory.

The consequences of these two distinct attitudes towards legitimate methods by which land can come to be possessed has, I believe, influenced the telling of history. The western telling of the history of Gitxsan territory is one in which traders, resource extractors, missionaries and the military took control of lands, resources and people which Europeans legitimately had a right to take control of. Considering that the

Europeans arrived to find well established societies and communities, considerable rationalization is needed to maintain the illusion that they had a right to usurp those lands and resources and make wards of the people. Western history has largely been written to make that justification. The Gitxsan version of history has required no such justification. Contrary to what Ralph Maud says, Gitxsan oral histories are not heraldic glosses or apologia for the aristocratic families (1982:160), nor can they be since there are no aristocratic families or any other social group wielding power over the rest of society. There is no colonial conquest of peoples, lands and resources to be justified in historical narrative. While Julie Cruikshank is, no doubt, correct when she says, "both written and oral histories are based on a selective reading of the past" (1998:4), I would contend that the major reason for bias in western-authored historical writings concerning North American history is absent from the oral histories of the peoples of the study area. In these oral histories, defeats are admitted along with victories, triumphs along with tragedies, and joys with sorrows. The histories of the peoples of the study area are not stories of conquerors and conquered, but stories in which each land-owning unit is considered to be part of an interacting whole. Each group is considered to be an essential part of the system. In an effort to support the continuation of the system of which they are all part, each house will reinforce and support others by giving them the resources and people they need to survive as a unit. The survival of the social organism is considered above the interest of an individual or a house. This is a system of societal interaction that results in a different kind of history and a different kind of history telling than in the West.

In the following sections, I will attempt to present the Gitxsan view of their oral histories as it was told to me and as it has been told in their own words.

The Nature of the Adaa'ox

Anthropologists, linguists and other western scholars have long assumed they understood the *adaa'ox* of the Gitxsan and their relatives, but their discussions have rarely approached the indigenous understanding of them. Gitxsan, Neil Sterritt and his colleagues (Sterritt *et al.* 1998:12) have provided a concise description of the *adaa'ox* as they are understood by the Gitxsan and their relatives. They say,

> The acquisition of Gitksan and Nisga'a territories is described in their adaawk̲, or oral histories. The adaawk̲ describe the ancient migrations of the house, its acquisition and defense of its territory, and major events in the life of the house, such as natural disasters, epidemics, wars, the arrival of new peoples, the establishment of trade alliances, and major shifts in power. The adaawk̲ also contain limx'oy, ancient songs that refer to events in which the people endured great hardship or loss. The ayuuks, or crests, depicted on poles and on ceremonial regalia also arise out of events in the history of the house as described in the adaawk̲.
>
> Every generation of Gitksan chiefs is responsible for ensuring the full transmission to the next generation of the adaawk̲ and associated prerogatives of their houses through a series of feasts at which these prerogatives are made public and validated by other chiefs.

This is exactly how I have come to understand the Gitxsan *adaa'ox* through several years of living and working in the Gitxsan community. I work from the premise that the Gitxsan are more likely to understand their own culture than are non-culture members and, therefore, I believe the above to be an accurate description of the nature of Gitxsan *adaa'ox.* Working from this understanding, I will discuss some of what I have learned from Gitxsan *adaa'ox,* how that correlates with western scientific data, and what can be learned from these oral histories which cannot be learned from other sources.

The Beginning of Time: Before the Flood

From the Gitxsan *andamatlasxw*, I have learned that la'oo'i, la'oo'i, wai la'oo'i in the time before time, the ancestors of the Gitxsan and their relatives lived in a world that was not as the world is now. In the time before chronological time, Raven walked among the people setting the world right. He brought light to the Human People and reordered Creation to be the world we now know. Raven set the stage for the ancestors of the Gitxsan to discover the newly created lands, to walk those lands and make them their own for all time.

From the *adaa'ox* I have learned how the ancestors of the Gitxsan and their neighbours took possession of these new and still rapidly changing lands and made them their own. The elders can tell the histories of their houses in chronological order. When the histories of all the houses are put together, as Susan Marsden has done in her great work (1987), the picture arises of the most ancient remembered origins of Gitxsan houses. Some of the earliest origins remembered are those of Wolf and Raven Clan people who lived in and around what is now northern Gitxsan territory at the headwaters of the Stikine, Nass and Skeena Rivers. These early people took up these uninhabited lands, claimed them, settled them and named the landscape. These Wolves and Ravens came with the idea of clans and crests, matrilineal kinship and the concept that land can only be claimed by original discovery. They were hunting people, often living near lakes. These ancient ancestors of some Gitxsan houses spoke Tsetsaut, as the Gitxsan would say, when referring to their Dene-speaking inland neighbours. A number of ancient settlements were built by these people, including Gitangasx̲, Gitwinhlt'uutsxwhl'axs and Ts'imanluuskeex̲s (Sterritt *et al.* 1998:16). Some of these people traveled on to found other villages and to join relatives in already established villages. Their long history reaches right to the present in the *adaa'ox* of Gamlax̲yeltxw, Luuxon, 'Niikyap, Meluulak, 'Wiiminoosik, Gyolugyet, 'Wiik̲'ax and many others.

While the Wolf and Raven Clan people were settling the northern part of what is now Gitxsan territory, other people were living along the coast and on the lower reaches of the Skeena and Nass Rivers. These people did not speak Tsetsaut, but spoke Ts'im Algyax, the language of the Tsimshian peoples. Still other people lived on the lower

Stikine and adjacent coast. These people spoke Tlingit. Although, in telling the *adaa'ox* today, the Gitxsan and their relatives will say these ancient ancestors spoke T'simsian, Tlingit or Tsetsaut, they were not the languages of today. Songs, names and place names which originated in these ancient times are often in the ancient versions of the contemporary languages. Although the meaning is remembered, the individual words may no longer be understood.

The coastal peoples, Tlingit and Tsimshian-speaking, moved up the river valleys and sometimes settled with the people of northern inland origin. Today, in villages throughout Gitxsan, Tsimshian, Nisga'a territory and beyond, the people tell how their earliest remembered ancestors were these inland and coastal peoples.

The ancestors of the Tsimshian Killer Whale Clan tell how the earliest place they remember living is on islands in the Metlakatla area at the mouth of the Skeena River. The people who first lived there resided in permanent villages, and seemed to be primarily sea mammal hunters. They had no clans or crests, but they did have chiefs. These early Tsimshian also had relatives speaking the same language living along the lower Nass River. The early Tsimshian-speaking peoples were allied in their separate villages by marriage. They lived on the Nass and Skeena for a long time before the Wolf and Raven Clan Dene-speakers arrived from the northern interior. The Tsimshian-speaking people tell many stories of living on the coast well before "the flood," which I believe to be the rapid sea level rise which occurred primarily between 10,500 and 9,500 B.P.

According to Marsden, the marriage of the two social systems of the interior Wolf and Raven peoples and the coastal Tsimshian resulted in the social structure of the northern Northwest Coast peoples (Marsden 1987:29).

During this very early period, the Haida were also living on their islands. They tell how there were two very distinct people living on Haida Gwaii in earliest times. They say that the Raven moiety people were the original Haida, and that the first Eagle ancestress came from the Tsimshian (Swanton 1905:316-317). There is even a Haida story which may be describing the habitation of Haida Gwaii before the last glaciation. This story, recorded by James Deans, says,

> Long ago....the climate was warm....in course of time this Northern climate not only grew colder, but ice began to form, and snow deeply covered first the hill tops, then afterward, the lowlands. Finally the cold became so intense that they had to move farther south. This they did led by a woman whose name was Call-cah-jude (woman of ice). They left for a warmer home where they lived for many generations. Afterward, when the climate again got warmer, they moved to Alaska and Queen Charlotte's Islands (Deans 1895:65-66).

I cannot be certain that this story is actually describing people being forced out of Haida Gwaii by glaciation because it is an isolated story, not part of a coherent, chronological body of oral narrative. There are other stories from along the coast which are similarly interesting but, they too, cannot be placed in a chronology. One of these, a Heiltsuk story recorded by Boas, says, "In the beginning there was nothing but water and ice and a narrow strip of shoreline" (Boas 1916:883).

The Oral Historical and Paleoenvironmental Record of Pre-flood Environments

The ancestral Haida, Tsimshian, Nisga'a and others tell of living along the coast well before the flood. The flood is an important time marker for all the peoples of the area. Although they cannot put absolute dates on their oral histories, they can place events in time by the use of time markers. The most significant time marker for the early period in which I am interested is the flood. But the flood is not the beginning of recorded time for the peoples of the area. Many stories are told that are said to have occurred before the flood in the historical chronologies. These stories tell of migrations, wars and other events experienced by well established peoples living in well established communities which were displaced by the flood. Many of these pre-flood stories describe environments which were very different from those we know today.

Although geologists once thought that the entirety of British Columbia and Southeastern Alaska were covered in ice, the evidence is building that there were refugia (Heaton and Grady 1993; Heaton, et al 1996; Mann and Ungolini 1985; Mann and Peteet 1994; Mann and Hamilton 1995) and that deglaciation along the coast was earlier than had previously been believed (Clague 1984:260). By 16,000 B.P., the entire outer coast from the Alaskan Peninsula to Vancouver Island was probably deglaciated and available for human habitation (Mann and Peteet 1994:136; Crowell and Mann 1996:18) Josenhans *et al.* contend that a "hospitable environment for human habitation" existed east of Haida Gwaii before the sea level rose (1995:73). Some of the stories told by the Gitxsan and other peoples of the northern Northwest Coast which are said to have occurred before the flood may have taken place at locations which were glacial refugia. Most, though, seem to have ensued in locations which were newly deglaciated.

A Treeless Environment: Early Succession Stages

Gitxsan chief, Lelt, Fred Johnson, described how his ancestors settled in Gitxsan territory when the land was treeless, "open just like in the spring time" (F. Johnson 1986:18). A Tahltan story tells how their ancestors entered their land when it was "still young" (Emmons 1911:18). A Haida story describes the first trees to grow on the islands (Hill-Tout 1898:5). A treeless tundra environment has been described by paleoenvironmentalists for the submerged area that is now Hecate Strait. By 13,700 B.P. this area was a sedge tundra-like environment (Barrie *et al.* 1994:128). The adjacent section of eastern Graham Island (of Haida Gwaii) was a dwarf shrub tundra environment with mosses and willows at that time (Barrie *et al.* 1994:123). Swanton recorded a Haida story in which birch trees were said to have been growing. Swanton notes this as perplexing, in that birch does not grow on Haida Gwaii at the present

(1905:56). The events in this story may have taken place when birch did grow on Haida Gwaii during an earlier succession stage.

Increased Land Mass of Haida Gwaii

Unlike the Gitxsan, the Haida have an origin story. This story is part of the Raven cycle and involves a series of events which westerners would likely say are mythological. It is interesting, though, that all of these events with which I am familiar, occur on the east coast of Haida Gwaii at Skidegate, Rose Spit and Cape Ball, where refugia may have occurred on the exposed shelf.

Haida stories of the earliest remembered time describe a landscape very different from that of the present. They describe the islands as being much bigger, with rolling grasslands where Hecate Strait is now (Kathleen Hans, pers. com.). Well known Haida oral historian, Captain Gold, related a story which described how the landscape was changed by the rising waters. He said, "Instead of a wide level country stretching southward from a range of hills, nothing but a few small islands were left, and all the mountain valleys were turned into long arms of the sea" (quoted in Wilson 1996:1). Hecate Strait is 88 kilometers wide at its narrowest point today, but during the Fraser Glaciation, a large part of western Hecate Strait and the southern part of Dixon entrance were subaerially exposed (Clague 1989:73). So much of what is now Hecate

Strait may have emerged that Haida Gwaii may have been connected to the mainland (Fladmark 1990:187). Fedje *et al.* contend that there was no more than a kilometer of water separating Haida Gwaii and the mainland (2001). There is a Tlingit story recorded by Swanton which describes Haida Gwaii as being much bigger than it is today (1909:181). It says, "the Queen Charlotte group formed one large solid body of land." Geological evidence indicates that, from 13,000 to 10,500 B.P., when sea levels were lower during glaciation, the Islands were approximately 3,000 square kilometers compared with their land mass of 1,500 square kilometers today (Fedje *et al.* 1996b:131). Much of Haida Gwaii was above sea level during glaciation because the ice was thinner there than on the mainland, so that eustatic drawdown dominated over isostatic loading (Clague 1989:69).

The Haida also say that there were fresh water lakes where Skidegate and Cumshewa inlets are now (Kathleen Hans, pers. com.). This is likely to have occurred when sea levels were lower and these inlets became isolated from the sea, leaving low-lying salty basins which eventually become freshwater lakes. As sea levels rose again with deglaciation, these freshwater lakes would be breached by the sea and, once again, become inlets.

A picture is beginning to form from the work of several paleoenvironmentalists that confirms what Haida oral histories say about this early time. Non-aquatic plant materials in a core taken from Cape Ball have been dated to 16,000 B.P. indicating that the area was not glaciated at the height of the last Wisconsin glaciation (Clague *et al.* 1982b:1792). Other evidence related to endemic plant species confirms that glacial refugia existed on Haida Gwaii and other outer coastal areas of British Columbia and Alaska (Heusser 1989:91; Ogilvie 1989:127). A large number of endemic animal species, including a subspecies of caribou (*Rangifer dawsonii*) and a subspecies of black bear (*Euarctos americanus carlottae*), suggest that these species were isolated from the mainland for a long time (Foster 1965; Fladmark 1990:186). Clague contended over ten years ago that there may have been substantial ice free areas on Haida Gwaii (1989:67). The evidence has since grown.

The Haida and Tlingit stories seem to indicate that people lived on Haida Gwaii during the late Pleistocene when sea levels were lower and the land mass was larger. Corroborative paleoenvironmental evidence is growing that there may have been habitable refugia which would have made it possible for people to have lived there at that time. Dixon, Heaton and Fifield maintain that, over the next few years, they "expect to see a flow of important discoveries" regarding the early peopling of Alaska (1997:11).

Deglaciation

The deglaciation process on the northern Northwest Coast is complex, especially in regard to sea level histories. At the height of glaciation the mainland, particularly inland areas, carried a heavy ice load and was, consequently, considerably isostatically depressed. The ice was at least 2000 meters thick over the Coast Mountains (Gottesfeld 1985:36), resulting in subsidence of 200 meters or more. The degree to which an area was depressed would depend upon ice load and substrate material. At the same time, the great ice sheets on land subtracted water from the ocean so that eustatic sea levels dropped about 100 meters worldwide. In the mainland parts of the study area, the drop in eustatic sea level was counter-balanced to a certain degree by the depression of the land. On the outer coast, especially at Haida Gwaii, a very different situation reigned. There, the ice loading was much less, therefore depression was not as severe. Subsidence at Prince Rupert on the outer coast was only about 13 meters, and it was even less on Haida Gwaii (Gottesfeld 1985:67). Added to the effect of lower eustatic sea levels on Haida Gwaii was the effect of forebulge which caused the islands to rise upward. Therefore, while relative sea levels on Haida Gwaii were much lower than at present, on the mainland at Prince Rupert, the effect was not as great.

During the initial stages of deglaciation, eustatic sea levels rose, causing a rapid rise in relative sea levels both on the inner and outer coasts with resultant marine intrusions in mainland valleys. As the greatly depressed mainland areas rebounded, the sea retreated from the valleys and shores in a complex process with land continuing to rebound and eustatic sea levels continuing to rise for a time. Eventually eustatic sea levels essentially stabilized, but isostatic rebound continued.

On the outer coast on Haida Gwaii the scenario was quite different during deglaciation. During the initial stages of deglaciation, eustatic sea level rose rapidly, then, as the forebulge collapsed, the relative sea level rise was compounded. Still later, at a slower rate, the land rebounded resulting in somewhat lower sea levels again.

The Flood

Every people in the area of this study tell stories of the flood - the Tsimshian-speaking peoples (Barbeau n.d.b:96, n.d.c:262, 315,335; Boas 1916:621-625), the Haida (Deans 1899:66-67; Swanton 1908:116, 1905:231; Wilson 1996:1), the Tlingit (De Laguna 1960:131-130; Garfield and Forrest1961:89; McClellan 1975:74) and others. They are obviously not the same story passed from person to person and place to place, because they vary so greatly in location, participants and details. The bulk of this rise in sea level occurred between 10,500 B.P. and 9,500 B.P. (Fedje *et al.* 1996a:133). Paleoenvironmentalists say that the sea level rise of about 100 meters was rapid (Bloom 1983:42; Clague *et al.* 1982b; Pielou 1991:126). Recent work by Hetherington *et al.* emphasizes how rapid the inundation of some areas was. In a 400 year period from 9,250 B.P., the coastline east of Haida Gwaii retreated 100 kilometers (Hetheringtin *et al.* 2001). Due to the complex coastline and varying affects of ice load on the northern Northwest Coast, some places were inundated by 200 meters of water when the ice sheets melted (Barrie and Bornhold 1989:1242; Clague *et al.* 1982a:598). This event affected the peoples of the area by profoundly altering the geography and human settlement patterns. So great was the impact of this event that many, many different stories of how it affected people have been remembered. It is not just the coastal people who have recorded this event in their oral histories. People well inland were directly affected by the flood as river valleys, like that of the Skeena and Kitamat, became inlets. Even further from the coast, people were affected as displaced populations migrated inland.

The coastal peoples tell how they had to keep moving to higher and higher ground as sea level rose; of entire islands and mountains which were submerged. A Tlingit story said, "At the time of the flood the Nanyaa'yi were climbing a mountain on the Stikine called Seku'qhle-ca" (Swanton 1909:231). Another Tlingit story said, "There was a Flood, when all the people had to go to the tops of the mountains" (de Laguna 1960:131). Other flood stories are the stories of interior peoples who experienced the flood, as marine intrusions, well inland up river valleys. A Tahltan informant told Teit, "There was a big flood....The people got up on top of a mountain" (1921a:224)). Flood stories recount serious dislocation of some small groups. A Tlingit story of the Dalqhl'awedi said, "After the Flood, people came down the Nass River from the interior. Then when the Flood went down, they spread all over" (de Laguna

1960:139). Some were forced far from their original homes, and even joined different nations. Others were forced to relocate temporarily, and returned to their original locations after the waters retreated from the valleys.

The flood is an event which is also an important time marker in another body of knowledge - that of paleoenvironmentalists. Although their methods of creating, storing and transmitting knowledge differ from those of the Gitxsan and their relatives, they now seem to possess a greater understanding of the glacial and early postglacial environments of the Northern Northwest Coast area. For many years, geologists believed that the Cordilleran ice sheet covered nearly all of what is now called British Columbia right to the ocean, calving into the sea along the entire coast (Klein 1965:7; Hamilton and Thorson 1983). The same was thought to be true for the coast of Southeast Alaska (Coulter *et al*. 1965; Hamilton and Thorson 1983:38) In recent years, paleoenvironmentalists have begun to compile evidence that this was not so.

It was once believed that the only refugia were nunataks which supported only a few species of plant life (Nasmith 1970; Sutherland Brown 1968). Evidence of larger coastal refugia began to grow from the botanical evidence of endemic and disjunct plant species, particularly on the Queen Charlotte Islands, Vancouver Island, and the coast of Alaska (Warner *et al*. 1982; Heusser 1989; Ogilvie 1989; Schofield 1989). Refugia included headlands between valley glaciers on the ocean side of islands and on the exposed low-lying continental shelf (Heusser 1989:101). In the last twenty years, core samples have revealed that plants were thriving in low-lying areas along Hecate Strait on the east coast of the Queen Charlotte Islands and in Queen Charlotte Sound off the mainland coast north of Vancouver Island at a time when lower sea levels had exposed those areas. As previously mentioned, Clague, Mathewes and Warner contend, that there was a well established and diverse flora in the Cape Ball area east of Haida Gwaii by 16,000 B.P.(1982b). Mathewes describes this environment as tundra-like, dominated by grasses, sedges and wetland vegetation (1989:83). Because most of the surrounding areas were glaciated at the time, it is unlikely that the flora was introduced from outside the area, but it is more likely that the flora persisted in a refugia all through the last glaciation (Clague *et al.* 1982b:1793). This was at the height of the Fraser Glaciation when those areas had previously been believed to be covered with ice (Warner *et al.* 1982). By 13,000 years ago, the environment had developed into a dwarf-shrub tundra, and by 12,000 years ago forest of lodgepole pine, alder, spruce and hemlock began to form (Mathewes 1989:85-7).

In addition to those on Haida Gwaii, substantial refugia may have existed in other locations along the northern coast. Both significant nunatuks and oceanside refugia may have existed on Baranof Island during the Fraser Glaciation. There is evidence, that subalpine fir has survived there since the mid-Wisconsin (Heusser 1989:96-97). There is evidence, in the form of plants and insects, that parts of Kodiak Island have been ice-free since the Illinoian Glaciation (Heusser 1989:98). In very recent years, the work of Timothy Heaton and his colleagues on Prince of Wales Island off the southern coast of Alaska has proven conclusively that substantial refugia existed. They have revealed that brown bears lived on Prince of Wales Island through the last glaciation (Heaton and Grady 1993; Heaton *et al.* 1996). Heaton *et al.* directly contend that if large omnivores like bears could have lived there during glaciation, humans could as well (1996:191). The mounting evidence that there were substantial refugia along the coast habitable by humans correlates well with Tsimshian, Nisga'a, Haida and Tlingit stories of people living along the coast well before the flood.

Population Displacement

Many, many flood stories describe population displacements. Some stories tell how people were forced to move to higher and higher ground, but stayed in the area of their pre-flood villages. Others relate how they were widely displaced. At that time, during deglaciation, much of the land might not have been able to support substantial human populations. This may be why not all populations could stay in the same general area from which they had been displaced by the rising waters. Nisga'a chief, Sagaa'wan told Barbeau:

> Our grandfathers were at Leesems (Nass River) in the beginning. The flood came and they drifted away (Barbeau n.d.a:296).

Sagaa'wan then explained that six canoes drifted to Tlawaq on Prince of Wales Island.

But,

> They were crowded....they could not make a living....They tried to find their way back to Leesems (Barbeau n.d.a:296).

Some island-dweller's islands were completely submerged as this story told by a Tsimshian of Kitkatla seems to indicate:

> The Gitxahla people had many villages on what is now Pitt Island and Banks Island....the waters rose and now the small islands became submerged and then the people who up til this time had kept moving up into the hills loaded everything into their large canoes and the high hills and mountains were now submerged. Only here and there were small portions of the hills....soon these disappeared and the people began to drift about....
>
> As the water subsided, the people followed it down until it came to its own sea level and then they began to look for their new villages. The old ones were completely gone and everything was strange (Barbeau n.d.e).

Ice Dammed Lakes

At the time of the flood ,and shortly thereafter there were many profound changes occurring on the landscape. This was a time when the newly deglaciated land was becoming available for human habitation and people were walking that land and claiming it for their kin groups. Some stories describe how large lakes formed in the river valleys. One of these, at the headwaters of the Skeena, is called "the Very Oldest Lake" or "the Lake of the Skeena"(Maud 1993:95). The story describes the rapid increase in the size of the lake. It says:

> ....the waters of the great Lake became swollen then overflowed. The great Lake and the Skeena River was flooded (Maud 1993:95).

The same story describes a second flood event on the same lake:

> And then another years was come that two brothers of the same village started off and they went up to that Oldest Lake....Then the water swelled again as it swelled before....he saw the waters rise up higher and also the Skeena River was flooded again more than it was before, for the water of Oldest Lake was swelled up higher than ever (Maud 1993:95).

This story seems to be describing a proglacial lake like those reported by Gottesfeld at other locations on the Skeena River (1985:46). This process of glacial lakes filling and emptying repeatedly has been described by paleoenvironmentalists (Pielou 1991:186). Such lakes form when gravel created by the glaciers and pieces of ice block river drainages forming an ice dam behind which a lake builds. Sometimes these ice dams erode, allowing the water to drain relatively slowly but, at other times, the ice dams fail suddenly in a phenomena called a glacial outburst (Pielou 1991:188). The result causing catastrophic flooding downstream.

A Haida story appears to describe an ice dam breaking, causing precipitous flooding, although the ice dam and lake behind it must have been very small or the witness would not have lived to tell the story. This is the story of a young Haida man, Scanna Gan Nuncus, who lived about three miles west of where Skidegate is now. The story as recorded by James Deans says:

> One day, making a further venture than usual, he sailed up the Hunnah River....this river in olden times was three times larger than it is now....the waters of the sea came higher up on the land than is now the case.
>
> After pulling up the river....at the place where he went ashore, in the bed of the river, were a number of large boulders....
>
> While resting by the river, he heard a dreadful noise, up stream, coming toward him. Looking to see what it was, he was surprised to behold all the stones in the river bed coming down towards him....(he) ran into the timber.
>
> He found he had made a mistake, because all of the trees were cracking and groaning....When again at the river....he went to see what was pushing the stones and breaking the trees; on reaching them he found that a large body of ice was coming down, pushing everything before it....he fled towards home (Deans n.d:44.).

In describing the Hoona River as "three times larger than it is now," the story may be describing a river swollen with glacial meltwater. Large boulders in the riverbed near the mouth of the river is a common phenomenon during deglaciation as large boulders are swept downstream by the increased volume, especially when ice-dams break and cause rushes of water which can displace boulders larger than could ordinarily be moved by the river's normal flow. The reference to higher sea levels at the time may date the story to the period around 9,000 B.P. (Fedje *et al.* 1996b:34) when sea levels on Haida Gwaii were about 15 meters higher than at present because the process of rebound was not complete.

Marine Intrusions

Because of the isostatic depression of the inland areas of the west coast, when the ice began to melt and eustatic sea level began to rise, there were considerable marine intrusions in valleys along the coast (Clague 1984). These appeared as floods to the people living in the valleys. Sometimes these marine intrusions occurred in a very short period of time. Clague contends that the sea transgressed the entire Kitamat valley from Kitamat to Terrace in a very short period of time just after 11,000 B.P. (1984:261). A particularly remarkable and detailed oral history exists which describes the marine intrusion of the Skeena River valley (Barbeau n.d.b:262-4). Marius Barbeau recorded it from Frog Clan chief, Hlengwax, at Kitwangax in 1920. Before I quote the story, I must explain that, although the four hundred year duration of the marine intrusion seems collapsed into a single lifetime to those not familiar with the *adaa'ox*, Gitxsan have no difficulty understanding that these events took place over several generations.

Hlengwax told Barbeau that his ancestors, the Gitlusek, had a village on the Skeena near present day Kitwangax when a flood "covered the whole earth." He said:

> The level of the river rose....up to where the houses stood...The villagers grasped their belongings and carried them up into the hills....some of the men made rafts. The river was still rising. It floated the rafts and carried them toward the hillside....Then the flood waters reached up the mountain sides, not quite. It is at that time that the big

> fish appeared from the deep sea, the Naerhl of Finback (killer whale), the Hlpin or (sperm) whale. More (monsters) of the sea came up, the Matxyem-ts'em'aks or River Horses, the Medeegm-tsawayaks or Grizzly-Bear-of-the-Sea, the T'eeben or Sea-lion, the big Bullhead, some huge Frogs-of-the-sea, also the White-Bear or 'Mas'ol...the waters were still rising...After they had reached near the top, one of the rafts broke off its moorings and drifted away. Near the mountain peaks the water was not rising so fast, then it stopped. There the people could find no wood for their fires, only stones. The flood covered the whole earth....
>
> After the waters had all gone, some of the people went down the mountains, to find out what had happened to their villages. The houses were gone; they had been washed away. But the heavy house posts still stood on the ground. The others traveled down slowly, very slowly, down and down, every day, just as when they had gone up.... Some others went down to the Tsimsyan, on their rafts - the Gitsees. One of the rafts drifted to Git'amat; Neesexamalee drifted there. Another raft went on to the Haida - that of chief Laxah'nits. Another drifted to the Nass River - that of Hai'mas, the head chief. Tsalgait (Tlingit) was a place where another raft went; its chief was Hlaingwex. After the Flood, there remained many lakes, in which stayed the Grizzly-Bear-of-the-Sea, the Sea-lions, and sea monsters. All the fugitives who had not drifted away on rafts, wandered back home to their former villages (Barbeau n.d.b:262-4).

A scientific version of the same event exists. In it, geologist, John Clague describes how the sea came inland over 160 kilometers up the Skeena River valley from the present coast line at Prince Rupert, beyond where the city of Terrace is now, flooding the valley 200 meters deep (1984:263). Glacio-isostatic depression of the earth's crust was so great that, in spite of lower eustatic sea levels, coastal lowlands and valleys were transgressed by the sea during deglaciation (Clague 1981, 1984; Clague *et al.* 1982b) The marine intrusion peaked about 10,500 B.P. (Clague 1984:263; Gottesfeld

1985:37). The intrusion was relatively stable for several hundred years then extremely rapid emergence caused the sea to retreat from the valley (Clague 1984:264). From the perspective of the people who lived in the flooded valleys, the flood seemed to be subsiding. Other aspects of this story will be explained in the section below on extinct species.

Other stories appear to be describing marine intrusions. In a Nisga'a story told by Eagle Clan chief, Txalaghaihlk, he said to Barbeau that his ancestors were Ts'ets'aut living well inland as hunting and lake fishing people. He related their flood *adaa'ox* thus:

> The deluge at one time covered the entire world with water and this particular tribal territory in a distant place, a long way from the coast. The survivors claimed to know nothing of the coast, but always spoke of lakes and great valleys (Barbeau n.d.a:291).

This story goes on to say how the streams and lakes grew larger in this prairie (tundra) country (Barbeau n.d.a:291).

Rebound and Forebulge

The manner in which glaciation affected the area of this study is complex. One of the factors in this complex picture is ice loading. The weight of the ice was tremendous in the more inland regions. The ice thinned towards the coast and may have been absent altogether in some areas such as parts of Prince of Wales Island (Heaton and Grady

1993; Heaton *et al.* 1996) and what is now Hecate Strait (Josenhans 1997:74). Where the ice was thick and heavy, the earth's crust was isostatically depressed by the weight. Toward the coast where the ice was thin or absent, there was less depression (Clague *et al.* 1982b:608). At the edge of the ice in the area of concern in this study, the earth's crust was warped upward up in a forebulge (Clague *et al.* 1982b:614, Clague 1983:333). This caused some locations, like Haida Gwaii, to rise up out of the ocean exposing even more land than would have been caused by lower eustatic sea levels alone (Clague *et al.*1982a:614). The forebulge may have elevated Haida Gwaii by 63 meters (Josenhans *et al.* 1997:73). The elevations of paleo-shorelines in the north coast area range from over 200 meters above present sea level at the head of Kitamat Fjord, to 153 meters below present sea level in Hecate Strait, two locations which are only 150 kilometers apart (Josenhans 1997:74). This dramatic sea level history is considered to be the result of the migration and collapse of the forebulge in addition to eustatic sea level changes (Luternauer *et al.* 1989).

James Deans recorded a Haida story which relates how the sea rose and then retreated relative to the land, which could reflect part of the complex process by which sea level around the islands would have dropped due to lower eustatic sea level during glaciation, dropped further due to the building forebulge, rose with the eustatic sea level rise at the end of glaciation, and then dropped due to forebulge collapse. In this flood story it says:

> ....water covered the whole earth, a least Hidery land....The people, terribly afraid of the rising waters, made for their canoes and the high mountain near Gumshend, Queen Charlotte's Islands, which was above the rising waters....those who reached the mountains remained there until the waters dried up. Then they ventured down again and tried to find the homes they left, but all was so changed no trace of them was to be seen (Deans 1895:66-7).

Extinct Species

Many oral histories of the peoples of northwestern North America relate events which involve "monsters," "supernatural creatures" or apparently fantastic animals. I believe what is often being described are extinct species which may have been misinterpreted as monsters or supernatural creatures by anthropologists and other western scholars. The Gitxsan have a word for extinct species which is *simaloo'*. I expect that this word might frequently have been translated mistakenly as "monster."

A few incidents during this study have resulted in the realization that "monsters" may in fact be extinct species. In one, I had read several versions of a story recorded by Barbeau and Beynon (Barbeau n.d.c:307, 318, 346; 1950a:42) in which a huge bird is described. Several times I read that the bird had human faces on its wings which sounded unreal. Then I read a version (Barbeau n.d.c:343) that said the bird had patterns **like** human faces on its wings. From this I realized how difficult it can be to translate things which are unfamiliar. The translations of the other versions of the story may have been too literal making the possible - a large bird with a particular pattern on its wings - seem impossible: a large bird with human faces on it.

In another instance I was pondering the idea: how does an elder relating an *adaa'ox* today describe animals from an extinct genera such as a giant ground sloth or a Stellar's sea cow? It suddenly dawned on me that one particular "monster," referred to in several stories I had read, might be an ordinary but extinct animal since it was referred to in ordinary contexts such as hunting stories; so I asked Gitxsan chief Xhlex, David Harris, what the *medig'm ts'a 'wii aks* (literally translated as "grizzly bear of the sea") looked like. He told me, "It looks like a big hippopotamus that lives in the ocean. It has flippers and a tail like a seal's on the back end." This sounds to me like a description of a Stellar's sea cow, which only became extinct in the eighteenth century.

In the story of the marine intrusion quoted at length above, the literal translation of *medig'm ts'a 'wii aks* is given as grizzly bear of the sea, but Barbeau probably did not realize that it was an ordinary animal being spoken of, namely, the Stellar's sea cow. In another reference in the story, the *matxyem-ts'em' aks* is translated as "River Horses." This is not a good translation. *Matx* may refer to a mountain goat and *ts'em aks* means "of the water," not necessarily the river. How horses entered the definition is unclear; horses did not exist in pre-European contact Gitxsan country, so why would an animal in an ancient story be translated as such? The word the Gitxsan now use for horse is "*gyoodun.*" If Barbeau had asked what the *matxyem-ts'em' aks* was, he might have gotten an answer as I did when I asked about the *medig'm ts'a 'wii aks*.

A Tlingit story recorded by Swanton tells of a time when there were "monsters of the sea and land" that were harmful to people (1909:101). The story goes on to say that the large dangerous animals have either died off or become less harmful. This seems to refer to extinctions of some species or genera and the extinction of larger species within a genus.

Although there are several stories from the study area which say that a long time ago large, dangerous animals roamed the earth, I would like to bring in a description from outside the study area because it provides what appears to be a clear description of the relationship between humans and Pleistocene megafauna. This description is from a book of traditional stories by Sahtu Dene elder, George Blondin:

> When the world was new, gigantic animals called Na?acho roamed the earth. There were many different kinds of these creatures. Some were birds and some were four-legged animals. Some would kill and eat human beings....all were dangerous.
>
> The people were sometimes able to turn the tables, killing and eating these huge animals. This usually happened by accident. Na?acho would occasionally walk into a swamp and sink. Because of their great size and weight, these creatures were unable to get out, and they died there. The people would then take their meat.
>
> But it was far more frequent for Na?acho to kill people. It was useless to fight these creatures because of their great size. Not only were they powerful, but they could run very fast - faster than any man.

> The people often used the fact that the Na?acho were so big to escape from them. They would run out onto thin ice, and the huge animals chasing behind them would run after them. The great beast would then fall through the ice and drown. Sometimes the fleeing people would run into thick timber and the animals chasing them would get stuck between the trees (Blondin 1990:27).

I find this passage particularly interesting because of its detailed description of a predator-prey relationship which is very different from that of Paul Martin's Pleistocene overkill hypothesis (Martin 1973, 1974).

When an extinct animal can be related to another member of the genus which is extant, it is often quite obvious that it is an extinct species that is being described. Probably the most obvious example in the body of literature which I have examined is that of giant beaver (*Castoroides ohioensis*) (Barbeau n.d.c:286, 1950a:105, 1961:3; Blondin 1990:30, 1997:82; Garfield and Forrest1961:23; Swanton 1909:219). There are other stories of large animals which the storytellers were able to relate to extant species, such as a story recorded from the Tlingit by Swanton. The story specifically mentions wolves as being large and dangerous to people then, unlike now (Swanton 1909:101). The dangerous wolves might have been the large species, dire wolves (*Canis dirus*), which became extinct at the end of the Pleistocene (Anderson 1984:55). The late Alice Wilson, Hawaa'w, told me a story of an animal which she said was like a large mountain lion (pers. com.). This may have been a steppe lion (*Panthera leo*) or an American lion (*Pantera leolatrox*). Giant beaver, steppe lions and American lions were all found in Alaska, and dire wolves were found just south of the glaciated area until the terminal Pleistocene or early Holocene (Matheus 1994:56; Anderson 1984:55). These animals may have moved into newly deglaciated areas, just as humans did.

Other animals are described in the oral histories which might be extinct species. These include large shellfish (Barbeau n.d.c:317, 352; Garfield and Forrest 1961:113; Swanton 1909:41, 199), large octopus (Swanton 1909:40) and an amphibious reptile, called *gonaqadet* by the Tlingit (Barbeau 1950a:295; Swanton 1909:165) and *wasko* by the Haida (Barbeau 1950a:316, 1953:305; Deans 1899:58) which is sometimes described as looking like an alligator.

In some *adaa'ox,* creatures are named without being described, such as the *matxgyem ts'm aks* or "frogs-of-the-sea" mentioned in the story of the marine intrusion of the Skeena (Barbeau n.d.a:263). It is impossible to determine what they might be, unless a description could be obtained as I was able to do with the *medig'm ts'a 'wii aks.*

Although we now know that the entire coast was not glaciated as had previously been believed (Clague *et al.* 1982b; Dixon *et al.* 1997; Heaton, *et al* 1996; Mann and Peteet 1994; Mann and Hamilton 1995), and we know that parts of the coast were deglaciated earlier than had previously been believed (Josenhans *et al*. 1995, 1997; Luternauer *et al*. 1989; Warner *et al*. 1982), little is known of the animal species which lived along the coast in refugia or in the newly deglaciated areas. This makes it difficult, from a scientific point of view, to know which extinct species the Pleistocene peoples of the northern Northwest Coast might have come into contact with. The oral histories from the area do seem to indicate, though, that such encounters did occur.

Christopher Hanks, referring to Dene stories of giant beaver, questions whether these stories relate directly to the time when the animals existed, or if they are the result of knowledge of fossilized skeletal material (1997:187). Although this is an important consideration, I have no such doubts for stories of the Gitxsan, Tlingit, Haida and other peoples of the northern Northwest Coast which seem to be about extinct animals, because these stories are part of a coherent chronology. These stories are the earliest component of a chronology which reaches from the Pleistocene to the present. Additionally, the damp environment and acidic soils of the Northwest Coast provide poor conditions for preservation of megafaunal remains.

Return of Stability

After the flood and the subsequent population shifts, it seems a certain measure of stability returned for a time to the people and the changed landscape. The Gitxsan *adaa'ox* describe a long period of relative peace and prosperity before major upheavals occurred again, at a time which I believe correlates with the climatic downturn at the end of the hypsithermal - but that's another story.

Correlations Between Archaeological Evidence and the Adaa'ox

Archaeologists (McMillan 1988:15), historians (Dickason 1992) and other western academics have often contended that archaeology is the only way to know "prehistory." I believe that other knowledge systems can also provide information about the ancient past, and that there is value in examining both sources of knowledge. A number of archaeologists have agreed with this position in recent years. This issue will be discussed in detail in the following section.

When I first began to examine oral histories in an academic manner, I had no idea how old they were. I initially thought that I would try to correlate archaeological data with them. Soon after I began reading the paleoenvironmental literature I realized that the stories were older than I had imagined. It soon became apparent that the stories reached back into the late Pleistocene. I believe that some of the stories are so old that they are older than the current archaeological evidence which has not been dated beyond 10,000 years for the northern Northwest Coast (Carlson 1996a:3). Although there are few sites on the northern Northwest Coast which date before 10,000 B.P., negative evidence cannot be relied upon to date the initial human occupation of the area. According to Erlandson and Moss, the rise in sea level at the end of the last glaciation "almost certainly" flooded early sites (1996:282).

The northern Northwest Coast is a large area with rugged terrain, convoluted shorelines and dense vegetation in which it is difficult to find archaeological sites other than the most obvious ones found at or near current sea level. The complex sea level history at the end of the Fraser Glaciation complicates the search. Most archaeological investigations in the area have focused on present shorelines. Because of the eustatic sea level rise of at least 100 meters, sites dating before 10,000 B.P. are deeply drowned. The technical difficulties and cost of finding such sites is considerable. Daryl Fedge and Heiner Josenhans have made some effort to find deeply drowned sites offshore from Moresby Island. In 1997 they recovered a single artifact, a flake tool, from a paleoriver terrace under 53 meters of ocean (Fedje and Josenhans 1999).

Although the archaeological record of the study area does not reach far into the time period with which I am concerned, archaeological evidence is still useful for my study. The oral histories recount some major migrations in the area following deglaciation. These accounts seem to correlate with the archaeological evidence. The oral histories say that there were existing populations of ancestral Haida, Tsimshian, and Tlingit who lived in parts of their current territories very early on, well before the "flood." These peoples may have lived in their territories through glaciation in refugia; or, possibly, arrived from the north or south very soon after deglaciation began. These first people may be the bearers of what Carlson (1990a, 1996a) calls the Pebble Tool Tradition. According to the oral histories, still before the "flood," other people arrived to find the Haida, Tsimshian, and Tlingit already settled. The new arrivals were the matrilineal, Wolf and Raven moiety, Dene-speaking people. This oral historical version of the ancient past on the northern Northwest Coast may correlate with the archaeological theory of the Dene, bearers of microblade technology (Carlson 1979; Dumond 1969, 1974), moving along the coast where pre-existing cultures with different technologies were already established (Ackerman 1996a:131; Hobler 1978; Fladmark *et al.* 1990:231). The archaeological evidence is also important to my study because it indicates that there were both interior hunting peoples and coastally-adapted peoples very early on. This picture, too, correlates with the oral historical evidence.

Archaeology of the Study Area

Do the Northwest Coast Peoples Come From Beringia?

It has long been assumed by archaeologists that the peoples of the northern Northwest Coast came from Beringia. Many North American indigenous peoples are offended by that hypothesis because they believe they were placed on their lands by the Creator at the beginning of time, but not all Northwest Coast people object to the proposition that they came from Asia. As Gitxsan chief Xhlex told me, “You can see it on our faces” (pers. com.). Genetic studies indicate similarities between native North American and northeast Asian populations (Szathmary 1981, 1994; Turner 1992, 1994). There are also similarities in the artifact complexes of late Paleolithic Siberia and the early period on the northern Northwest Coast (Carlson 1996a:3).

According to Erlandson and Moss, the earliest coastal peoples apparently had a chipped stone industry with lanceolate or leaf-shaped bifaces and no microblades (1996:294). Microblade technology appears on the northern Northwest Coast between 9,000 and 8,500 B.P. (Erlandson and Moss 1996:294). Erlandson and Moss contend that, "These developments are almost certainly related to two or more migrations from Northeast Asia to the New World" (1996:295).

Pebble Tool Tradition

Carlson contends that there are two cultural traditions found on the northern Northwest Coast during the early period (1996a:8), the time of significance to this study. The Pebble Tool Tradition is one of these. Carlson contends it derives from a Beringian coastal culture that expanded south along the coast as the land became habitable 11,500 to 10,500 years ago (1991a:114). The Pebble Tool Tradition is found along the coast from Haida Gwaii to Oregon, and is distinguished by foliate bifaces and choppers and scrapers made from pebbles (Carlson 1996a:8). Pebble Tool sites are found in locations which indicate fishing and sea mammal hunting were likely more important than land mammal hunting, and the coastal distribution of this tradition indicates the use of efficient watercraft (Carlson 1996a:8). Carlson contends that the bearers of this tradition were coastally adapted people who spread down the coast from the north at least 10,000 years ago and then spread up the river valleys (Carlson 1983a:90, 1990a:66, 1996a:8). Others have called this tradition the Old Cordilleran Culture and advanced the proposition that it originated among inland hunters who moved to the coast, then moved along the coast adapting to a marine existence (Butler 1961; Borden 1975; Matson 1976).

Microblade Tradition

Carlson believes the Pebble Tool Tradition predates microblade technology on the north coast (1996a). The Microblade Tradition first appears on the northern part of the coast, then at later dates in more southerly sites. It is characterized by assemblages of microblades, microblade cores, bifaces, scrapers, choppers and gravers. Fladmark has called this the North Coast Microblade Complex (1982). Ackerman contends that the frontally fluted, wedge-shaped type of microblade core found in Alaska at Ground Hog Bay 2 and Hidden Falls is similar to those from the older (11,000-10,000 B.P.) Denali or Paleoarctic tradition sites in central and southwestern Alaska and to the Diuktai sites in Siberia, indicating a north to south movement (Ackerman 1996a). Although the Pebble Tool and Microblade Traditions are quite distinct, Carlson argues that the ways of life of both peoples was probably quite similar (1996a:9). Carlson raises the question of whether these represent two distinct cultural traditions or just the introduction of a new technology (1996a:9).

A number of archaeologists (Borden 1975; Dumond 1969, 1974; Carlson 1979) have suggested that there might be an association between microblade technology and the speakers of the Na-Dene language phylum. The proposed relationship between the Na-Dene languages - Dene, Tlingit and Haida - has been contested, and the existence of such a phylum largely refuted (Levine 1979) but, I believe, some elements of the thesis have merit. As Carlson and others contend, it may be true that the Dene brought microblade technology to the northern Northwest Coast, and the oral histories indicate that the Dene peoples conjoined with the other peoples already residing there when the Dene arrived. Although the oral histories seem to indicate that this intermingling occurred more with the Tlingit, Nisga'a, Gitxsan and Tsimshian than with the Haida, a very distinctive change of technologies, from one dominated by bifaces to one dominated by microblades, also occurred on Haida Gwaii after 9,000 B.P. (Fedje *et al*. 2001).

The Earliest Northwest Coast History is an Archaeological Mystery

Scholars once though that ice lingered on the northern Northwest coast until well into the Holocene and, therefore, the area was not inhabited until much later (Ackerman *et al*. 1979:205). As the evidence builds for earlier than previously believed deglaciation and habitable areas and for glacial refugia, it has become clear that an archaeological record on the northern Northwest Coast exists which was submerged by rising sea levels at the end of the Fraser Glaciation. This leaves the origin of early cultures in the area an open archaeological question. In the following pages I will briefly outline what we do know from the archaeological evidence of the early period on the northern Northwest Coast.

The Earliest Sites - Over 9,000 Years

A site which changed the picture of the early period on the northern Northwest Coast is Ground Hog Bay 2 in Southeast Alaska (Ackerman 1968). Before this site was discovered, the early period in Tlingit territory was archaeologically unknown. The oldest component of the Ground Hog Bay 2 site, Component III, has been dated to about 9,200 B.P. (Ackerman 1968; 1980; Ackerman *et al.* 1979; Carlson 1991a:113; Moss and Erlandson 1995). One of the most remarkable things about this site is that obsidian found in Component III has been sourced to Mt. Edziza (Ackerman *et al.* 1979:198; Carlson 1994a). This indicates that trade over long distances was established by this early date and that coast-interior trade was established early (Ackerman 1996a). The Ground Hog Bay 2 site also suggests a strong marine orientation and the use of water craft (Ackerman 1992:22).

There are undated sites on Haida Gwaii which may be older than 10,000 years (Hobler

1978; Fladmark 1979b). One of these is Skoglund's Landing, investigated by Knut Fladmark. This site, at which pebble and flake tools were found is probably at least 8,000 years old, possibly as old as 10,000 years (Fladmark 1990). The earliest securely dated sites on Haida Gwaii are those of Daryl Fedje and his colleagues. Their work has greatly increased archaeological knowledge of the early period in Haida Gwaii with implications far beyond the islands. Fedje has investigated a number of sites on the east coast of Moresby Island and the adjacent islands. A number of these sites are over 9,000 years old, including Arrow Creek 2 which has been dated to 9,300 B.P. (Fedje *et al.* 1996a:138); Echo Bay, dated to 9,400 B.P. (op. cit:145); Hoya Passage site, 9,400 B. P. (op. cit:145); and Lyell Bay site, 9,400 to 9,100 B.P. (op. cit:147). These sites are significant for a number of reasons. One of these is that prior to the work of Fedje and his colleagues, intertidal sites on Haida Gwaii were undated. Their work also indicates there was a significant change in technology just before [illegible]000 B.P. (Moss and Erlandson 1995:13). One wedge-shaped microblade core found on Lyell Island corresponds closely to the Denali technology of central and southern Alaska 10,700 to 9,000 B.P. (Ackerman 1992) but most of the microblade cores found in the Moresby area were conical, comparative to the Anangula complex which appeared in southern Alaska around 9,000 B.P. (Fedje *et al.* 1996a:147; Magne 1996:157).

It seems certain that, with time and resources, sites of 10,000 years and older will be found under the sea. As I briefly mentioned before, Daryl Fedje and Heiner Josenhans have been working toward this with some success. They have been mapping the sea floor off Haida Gwaii with high-resolution digital terrain imaging systems and by means of sea floor sampling (2000:99). In 1997 a stone tool was recovered 53 meters below present sea level on a drowned delta flood plain off Moresby Island (2000:101). The tool, a simple flake, was probably used as a knife, according to the investigators (2000:101). On the same river system where this site was found, above current sea levels, are two other important sites, Arrow Creek I and Arrow Creek II (Fedje *et al.* 1996b; Fedje and Christiansen 1999).

Sites Dated 9-8,000 Years

Although there are only a few sites in the study area which are securely dated to be older than 9,000 years, there are a number which date just after that time. Ground Hog Bay 2, component II dates from 8,900 to 4,200 B.P. A variety of tools were found in this component including microblades, microblade cores, hammerstones, bifaces, scrapers and others (Ackerman 1992). The earliest component at the Hidden Falls site, dating to about 9,000 B.P., contained both pebble tools and microblades (Davis 1990). This site, too, indicates a marine adaptation and the use of boats (Erlandson and Moss 1996:291). Another site with both microblades and pebble tools is that of Chuck Lake on Heceta Island. This site, dating to about 8,200 B.P., exhibited a wide range of food resources (Ackerman 1988; Ackerman *et al.* 1985).

Conclusions Regarding the Archaeological Data

Because of the dynamics of coastal environments at the Pleistocene-Holocene transition, Erlandson and Moss emphasize the need for caution in the interpretation of the early record of northern Northwest Coast settlement. They say that we cannot be certain that the earliest part of the record is not missing (1996:294). In 1996, Fedje *et al.* contended that the archaeological data at the Arrow Creek 2 site, dating to 9,400 B.P., combined with the marine geological date, "suggest the possibility of a much longer record, now drowned, on earlier shorelines" (Fedje *et al.* 1996a:149). Fedje and Josenhans have since found evidence of human habitation in drowned locations (Fedje and Josenhans 2000) which augers the possibility that there are more drowned sites to be found. Fedje and his colleagues have found evidence of intensive human occupation along the eastern shores of Moresby Island at the edge of the drowned shorelines. That many, many habitation sites existed along the shoreline of 9,400 B.P. would strongly suggest that there are earlier sites along the submerged shorelines of earlier times, although it is not possible to know when these areas were first inhabited from the currently available evidence. It certainly seems more likely that the ancestors of those who created the numerous sites along the old shorelines, lived along the even older submerged shorelines, rather than that a very large number of migrants suddenly arrived and set about creating the many sites Fedje and his colleagues found which date to 9,100 to 9,400 B.P.

Even where the archaeological record exists on the northern Northwest Coast, the record is meager. The convoluted shorelines, rugged landscape and dense vegetation make it difficult to find sites. Most archaeological research has concentrated on the accessible shoreline areas, neglecting other kinds of possible habitation sites. Because of the huge area to survey and the difficulty of access, Wallace Olson contends that the archaeology of the region "is still in its infancy" (1994:99).

Correlations and Contradictions Between the Oral Historical Record and the Western Scientific Record

The Complex Origins of the Peoples of the Northern Northwest Coast

Archaeologists face a considerable challenge in trying to interpret the limited data they sometimes have. From a small amount of information they attempt to come to understandings about ancient cultures. Archaeology can be a powerful tool in this regard, but there are some things it cannot tell us about the ancient past and ancient peoples.

Carlson has concluded from the archaeological evidence that the early microblade-bearers are the ancestors of the Tlingit, Haida and Athapaskan peoples (1983a:93;1996b:217). He also contends that core territory and language features were maintained throughout prehistory (Carlson 1996b:226). I would say, from my understanding of the oral histories of the area, that is correct, but it is not the entire story. In the same article, Carlson says that the linguistic and archaeological evidence indicates that Tsimshian culture is an amalgamation of elements from many sources; that "deriving it from a single early cultural tradition is highly improbable" (1996b:216). I would say, from the oral histories, that this is entirely correct, but that it also applies to the other cultures of the area as well. This is why the peoples of the area do not tell a history of the Gitxsan or a history of the Tlingit, but they tell their history house by house. There is no single Tsimshian history, there are only the histories of each house which has come to call itself Tsimshian. The Tsimshian are a group of people who now speak the same language, have the same culture and own a set of contiguous house territories, but they are a group which has a complex and disparate past in which some kin groups (houses) once were a different cultural group, a different territory and spoke a different language. Although the oral histories as they are now told do not tell us what type of stone tools the ancient ancestors made, they do tell us that the most ancient ancestors of the Tsimshian-speaking peoples, the Tlingit and Haida, were all living in their territories when the Dene-speakers arrived. I cannot be certain, but it is possible that the early Tsimshian, Tlingit and Haida were the pebble tool users and the later-arriving Dene peoples brought microblades with them when they settled among the earlier arrivals. Moss and Erlandson say, "It is possible that early bifacial and microblade traditions of the Pacific Coast are related to two separate migrations from Asia to the Americas, but the precise temporal, spatial, technological, and cultural relationships between these early coastal (and adjacent interior) traditions remains to be established" (1995:17).

The Coastal Migration Hypothesis

There is a body of theory, relevant to this thesis, which has arisen in the scholarly literature over the last twenty years, commonly called the coastal migration hypothesis. It posits that the Americas were peopled by human groups traveling down the Pacific coast from Asia (Fladmark 1979a; Gruhn 1988). This not an entirely new idea, Barbeau and others suggested it long ago, but it is a new theory in that it suggests this migration took place during the late Pleistocene before the end of the last glaciation, while early anthropologists thought this migration was much later. The evidence presented in the body of literature pertaining to the coastal migration hypothesis often reinforces what the *adaa'ox* relate about the late Pleistocene occupation of the northern Northwest Coast area.

The most well known elucidation of the coastal migration hypothesis is probably that of Knut Fladmark in a paper written in 1979. In this paper, Fladmark claimed that, at the time of his writing, the possibility of a coastal route of migration into the Americas had not been seriously considered (1979a:55). He contended that a coastal migration was possible because a series of coastal refugia were available for human habitation (1979a:55). These ideas contradicted the received wisdom of the time, which maintained that early humans were interior-adapted big game hunters who, only later, moved to the coast and developed a coastal adaptation. It had also been generally believed that the entire coast was covered with ice during the late Wisconsin and was not habitable by humans. The coastal migration hypothesis has since become a likely alternative to the ice-free corridor theory of the peopling of the Americas. The viability of the coastal migration hypothesis continues to grow with additional archaeological, paleoenvironmental, linguistic and biological evidence.

Increasing support for the proposition of a coastal migration comes from the paleoenvironmental evidence which, in recent years, has significantly revised the geological history of the Northwest Coast (Fedje *et al.* 1996b:133). Such evidence has proven conclusively that areas on the north coast were deglaciated 14,000 to 15,000 years ago (Fedje 1993; Josenhans *et al.* 1995; Mathewes 1989; Mathewes and Clague 1982; Warner, *et al.* 1982) and that some areas were never glaciated (Heaton and Grady 1993; Heaton *et al.* 1996). Mathewes (1973, 1989) and Hebda (1983) have demonstrated that the coast of British Columbia was largely ice free before 13,000 B.P. The outer coast of Alaska was also ice free by 13,000 B.P. (Engstrom *et al.* 1990; Mann and Peteet 1994; Mann and Hamilton 1995). Evidence of early postglacial fauna also lends support to the coastal migration hypothesis, including evidence of brown bears living on Prince of Wales Island all through the last glaciation (Heaton *et al.* 1996) and bison and goats on Vancouver Island (Grant Keddie quoted in Fedje *et al*. 1996b:134). Several of the paleoenvironmentalists formulating this body of literature suggest that these environments newly discovered by the scientific world could, indeed, support humans populations (Barrie *et al*. 1994:129, Fedje *et al*. 1996a, 1996b; Fedje and Josenhans 2000; Heaton *et al*.1996). Recent work has documented in detail the extent of ice-free, subaerially exposed lands where Hecate Strait is now found. They conclude that the area was exposed for 4,000 years before is was inundated and that the period was an optimal one for human migration along the coast (Lacourse and Mathewes 2001).

The evidence of brown bears having lived all though the last glacial episode on Prince of Wales Island has enormous significance for the coastal migration hypothesis. Before this discovery, a body of evidence was accumulating for the presence of glacial refugia on the northern Northwest Coast, but it could only be argued from most of the previous evidence that deglaciation was earlier than had previously been believed. The data from Prince of Wales is positive proof of refugia so substantial that they are able to support large omnivores. Discoveries such as this are also significant because they demonstrate how quickly and radically our knowledge of a subject can change. In a 1995 paper, Putnam and Fifield (1995:30) were able to present evidence that proved early deglaciation and inferred the existence of refugia, but the new data, released shortly afterward by Heaton and his colleagues (1996) proved the existence of substantial refugia.

According to Fedje *et al.*, the archaeological and geological data they have accumulated from their research program on Haida Gwaii, lends further credence to Fladmark's hypothesis that people moved from Beringia, along the Northwest Coast, during the late Wisconsin (1996a:149; 1996b:134). They contend that rejection of the coastal migration model based on lack of evidence for pre-11,000 B.P. coastal sites south of the ice (as Workman has claimed, quoted in Busch1994) is a *non sequitur* because the 18,000 to 11,000 B.P. shorelines are immersed under 50 meters of ocean (Fedje *et al.*1996a:149).

In a discussion of the growing evidence of a late Pleistocene environment on the Northwest Coast which would have been habitable by humans, Fedje and his colleagues say, "That is not to say that people did not reach this and other parts of the Americas during or prior to the LGM (last glacial maximum)" (1996b:134). This is a point with which I concur. Although I am arguing for occupation of the northern Northwest Coast by at least the late Pleistocene, and I am contending that it is possible that humans lived along the coast all through the last glaciation in refugia. I, too, believe it is possible, I would even say probable, that humans lived south of the ice during the last glaciation. When they arrived there and where they came from is beyond the scope of this thesis and my expertise.

I would like to make note that there has been considerable discussion of Haida Gwaii in the paleoenvironmental/archaeological section of this dissertation because of its significance in the debate over the early peopling of the continent and the coastal migration hypothesis. Knut Fladmark, who largely initiated the discussion regarding the possibility of habitation of North America by the Pacific Coastal route, presents an notable conclusion. He says,

> ....there are intriguing suggestions of an early human presence on the Queen Charlotte Islands, possibly corresponding to the fact that those islands were an important biological refugium throughout the peak of the last major glacial episode. As such, the Charlottes are one of the first relatively large land areas south of Beringia assuredly capable of sustaining human life through that period. If the northern Pacific coast was used by early population expansions moving south of Beringia, those lightly glaciated islands and emergent land masses in Hecate Strait and Queen Charlotte Sound would have been important stepping stones along that route. Unfortunately while the archaeological finds....are suggestive, they are not proof, and archaeologists will eventually have to seriously address the problem of effectively examining submerged land areas if we are ever going to thoroughly assess the possibility of truly early human occupations of the Northwest Coast (Fladmark 1990:194).

Mal de Mer

Alexander Easton (1992) makes a pertinent point supporting the coastal migration theory when he contends that archaeologists have failed to adequately pursue the evidence, for a coastal route of migration, not entirely because of methodological difficulties, but primarily because of ideological impediments. He says, "Methodological constraints - questions of appropriate technology, research design, interpretation - are considered to be less important factors in comparison to a terrestrial ideology which promotes a form of intellectual *mal de mer* when archaeologists look seaward" (Easton 1992:28). Easton contends "the almost mythological entrenchment of the Ice-Free Corridor theory" has detracted from consideration of any possible alternative thesis (1992:29). In spite of the lack of archaeological evidence for early human presence in the corridor area and growing evidence for the inhospitable nature of the corridor's environment, many archaeologists have doggedly adhered to the idea that the entry route from Asia to the Americas must have been terrestrial. This notion is also related to the Clovis-first model in which humans were said to have first entered North America 11,500 years ago. With this model firmly entrenched, few archaeologists looked for sites older than Clovis and few had any reason to look for other routes of entry into North America which might have brought people south of the ice before 11,500 B.P.

The tendency to interpret archaeological data from the Northwest Coast with a terrestrial bias has been eroded in recent years but not entirely discarded. Borden was convinced that the early inhabitants of the area came from a more benign interior environment to the coast by valley routes only to find "a rather hostile North Pacific Coast" (Borden 1975:9). Maintaining that interior-oriented bias, Borden dismissed Fladmarks' (1974) (then) recently suggested coastal migration hypothesis (Borden 1975:24). As recently as 1995, Matson and Coupland have suggested that coastal Old

Cordilleran assemblages may be derived from an interior Protowestern culture that derived from Clovis (Matson and Coupland 1995). West, too, has continued to support the hypothesis that coastal cultures were derived from the interior (1996). This thesis is contradicted by Carlson who believes the Pebble Tool Tradition is an extension of a coastal Beringian culture (1990b:114; 1996a:4).

A significant factor in reversing this interior to coast hypothesis has been the overwhelming evidence which has accumulated in the last twenty years or so of early maritime adaptation. An essential aspect of the coastal migration hypothesis is a maritime orientation. The Namu site on the central coast (Carlson 1979, 1996b), Ground Hog Bay (Ackerman 1968, 1996b), Chuck Lake (Ackerman 1992) and Hidden Falls (Davis 1990, 1996) in Alaska and the Arrow Creek and Echo Bay sites on Haida Gwaii (Fedje *et al.* 1996a, 1996b), all early period sites, indicate a marine orientation with dependence upon watercraft, navigational skills and marine resources. Regarding the Arrow Creek and other early period sites on Haida Gwaii, Fedje and his colleagues contend that reliance upon marine resources was necessary because terrestrial resources were minimal. Terrestrial resources on Gwaii Haanas (Moresby Island) ten millennia ago were limited to black bear, land otter, two members of the weasel family, mice and, possibly small numbers of caribou (Fedje *et al.* 1996b:131).

James Dixon supports Easton's notion that there has been a dearth of archaeological investigation which would support the coastal migration hypothesis. He contends that earlier hypotheses, which stated that the Pacific coast of British Columbia and Alaska was entirely glaciated while an ice-free corridor along the eastern Rockies was open as a migration route between Beringia and areas south of the ice before 11,000 B.P., are mistaken, but that they have diverted research from the coastal area (Dixon 1997).

The oral histories of the northern Northwest Coast seem to support some aspects of the coastal migration hypothesis as it has been proposed by western scholars. The oral histories indicate that people were well established on the coast in a significant number of communities well before end of glaciation. The oral histories also suggest the possibility that people may have lived along the coast in refugia during glaciation. The stories seem to correlate with the archaeological and other data in their descriptions of maritime-adapted peoples living on the coast very early and later moving inland, while interior-adapted Dene-speaking peoples living, in the interior migrated to the coast.

Linguistic Evidence Regarding the Early Peopling of the Northern Northwest Coast

In 1929 Edward Sapir noted the diversity of languages along the Pacific coast. He proposed that language density (the number of languages in a geographical area) was greatest where a language originated. Suttles argued, based on this principle, that settlement along the coast was earlier than settlement inland (1987). Others have since supported this thesis, including Richard Rogers (1985b; Rogers *et al.* 1990; Rogers *et al.* 1991; Rogers *et al.* 1992), Johanna Nichols (1990:512-513) and Ruth Gruhn (1988).

Richard Rogers contends that greater language complexity along the Pacific coast of North America indicates that the area was probably inhabited before inland areas, which supports the idea of a coastal migration route (Rogers 1985a:104; Rogers et al. 1992:289). He purports that languages take time to diversify and argues that maximum linguistic diversity is found in areas which were unglaciated - the area south of the ice, Beringia and coastal refugia (Rogers 1985a:107), and also claims (Rogers 1985b:130) that this data indicates that people lived south of the ice before the last glaciation. Rogers *et al.* (1990:131) contend that the distribution of language isolates further indicates the existence of glacial refugia along the Pacific coast because isolates are only found in the unglaciated southern parts of North America and along the Pacific coast. Rogers (1986:17) comments specifically on the Na-Dene, saying that the greatest diversity among them is along the coast of Alaska which indicates that is the oldest part of the modern range of Na-Dene speakers. Regarding the Tsimshian, Rogers *et al.* (1990:133) contend that, although an ice-free refugium has not been demonstrated for their territory, the fact that there were refugia on nearby Haida Gwaii, indicates that there may have been Tsimshian refugia as well. Alternatively, they suggest (op. cit:133) that the Tsimshian may have moved inland from areas of the continental shelf which are now submerged. This correlates well with the Tsimshian descriptions of living in the area around the mouth of the Skeena and of having to move inland and to higher altitudes when sea level rose.

Correlating Linguistic and Biological Data

A number of scholars have correlated linguistic and biological data regarding the peopling of the Americas by three distinct groups (Greenberg *et al*. 1986, 1987; Rogers *et al*. 1991) This contention is of interest for my dissertation because of the construction of the Na-Dene group which correlates quite well with the peoples of concern in this study. Rogers *et al*. (1991:623) contend that the linguistic, biological and genetic data indicate that there were three major migrations into North America. This thesis includes Greenberg's linguistic data (Greenberg *et al*. 1987; Greenberg *et al*.1986); Turner's dental trait data (1983, 1986, 1992); and Williams *et al*. (1985), Torroni *et al*. (1992) and Crawford and Sukernik's (1983) genetic data. Rogers *et al*. claim that the diversity indicated by these various lines of inquiry arose when glacial barriers created isolation (1991:628). Although both Rogers and Greenberg agree that the Americas were peopled in three waves; however, they disagree on the timing. Rogers (1985b:130) believes people lived in North America before the Fraser Glaciation (1985b:130) while Greenberg *et al*. (1987:477) believe the three waves of migrants arrived no later than the terminal Pleistocene. Gerald Sheilds and his colleagues disagree that there is a correlation between language and genetic markers

(Shields 1997:103; Shields *et al.* 1994:203).

Although I see some merit in proposing the existence of a grouping which has been called Na-Dene, the oral historical evidence seems to indicate a different reason for their existence than that proposed by Rogers and his colleagues. The oral histories seem to agree with Rogers *et al.* (1991) that there were people living along the coast in glacial refugia or, at least, long before the end of the last glaciation, but these peoples were initially isolated from the Dene-speakers. The oral histories indicate that the Dene arrived on the coast in considerable numbers around the time of the Pleistocene-Holocene interface. At that time and for some time thereafter, the coastal peoples mixed genetically and culturally with the Dene. There was certainly linguistic mixing as well. I am not a linguist and cannot comment on this issue other than to say that some Gitxsan words were certainly borrowed from their Dene neighbours. I have mentioned briefly before, that the oral histories denote two aspects of language change. One of these is that sudden language shifts were common as linguistically diverse groups joined together, and the other is that the parts of ancient versions of the language are preserved in songs and names. Songs sometimes denote the discreet language changes in that the song of a Gitxsan house today may be said to be in Tlingit, Tahltan or another language.

An Anthropological Concept: Culture Area

The oral histories indicate that it is not only linguistic theory that may need some reconsideration. Anthropological ideas about the concept of culture area and some of the theories which derive from it may also need to be reconsidered.

The concept of culture area is a useful one which helps organize discussion of groups of peoples with shared cultural characteristics, but it is a concept which creates artificial dichotomies. Earlier in this dissertation I discussed the dichotomous aspects of the predominant western worldview as opposed to the synchronous indigenous worldview. I see these elements expressed in discussions of culture area. The archaeological and cultural anthropological literature often dichotomizes the Northwest Coast and Subarctic or Cordilleran culture areas. This dichotomous view combined with an hierarchical, evolutionary perspective made it possible for a body of literature to develop which contends that culture traits move unidirectionally from the coast to the interior, a view with which none of the indigenous peoples under consideration would likely agree. There are also dissenting voices within academia which have arisen regarding this thesis. Many have spoken by no longer expressing such views. They may be motivated by an appreciation of cultural relativity, an understanding appreciably lacking in those who argue for unidirectional coast to interior cultural influence. Others have come to an understanding of the relationship between cultures that is closer to the understanding of the members of the cultures under consideration. Madonna Moss

(1992:6), for example, contends that while the concept of culture area is useful, "it can serve to isolate culture areas from one another and shared features can go unrecognized or unexamined." It is likely that most members of the cultures of the area of this study see cultural influence as a complex process with cultural influences moving in both directions between coast and interior. The oral histories clearly document the two-way cultural exchange between coast and interior over a very long time.

Constraints Upon Archaeological Thinking: Clovis and Other Stories

Archaeology, too, has had ideological constraints on its development. Being the western discipline primarily responsible for the study of the ancient past, archaeology is the discipline to which I will now turn for both criticism and support of the arguments I make for the reliability of oral history.

A significant constraint on archaeological theorizing in North America has been the deeply entrenched and vigourously defended Clovis-first model of the peopling of the Americas (Dincauze 1984; Haynes 1969; Martin 1973; Taylor *et al.* 1996). This model contends that people first entered North America from Siberia by way of the Bering Land Bridge about 12,500 years ago. These big game hunters, bearers of Clovis point technology, traveled from Alaska, through the ice-free corridor, and spread throughout most of North and South America within about one thousand years.

Those who reject the Clovis model contend that adherence to the model has stultified archaeological research on the question of the initial peopling of the Americas. John Alsoszatai-Petheo (1986) has argued that the vehement rejection of all pre-Clovis sites for so many years derived from "paradigm bias." Karl Butzer (1988:202) contends that there is "danger that new sites which do not conform with the conservative paradigm may be rejected out of hand." The Clovis model of the peopling of the Americas was so firmly entrenched for so long that any sites said to be older than Clovis were subjected to standards of investigation higher than that to which post-12,000 B.P. sites were subjected (Ruth Gruhn pers. com.). Not only were potential pre-Clovis sites automatically dismissed, but contexts older than 12,000 B.P. were rarely investigated, further reducing the likelihood of discovering pre-Clovis sites.

Archaeologists reporting pre-Clovis sites have risked disdain within their profession. This situation reigned within the field of archaeology for several decades, until Tom Dillehay convinced a number of the leading proponents of the Clovis-first model to examine his site at Monte Verde, with Component I dating to 33,000 B.P. and Component II dating to 13,000 B.P. (Dillehay 1989). The examination resulted in their admission that Monte Verde may, in fact, be older than Clovis (Meltzer *et al.* 1997). Since the occurrence of that paradigm shift, discussion of other possible models of the peopling of the Americas has been far less professionally threatening.

Arguments for Accepting Oral Historical Evidence

A number of scholars, western and indigenous alike, have recently spoken of the benefits of utilizing oral histories in research about the past. Roger Anyon and his colleagues contend (1997:78), "Oral tradition and archaeology both have inherent but different limitations, which is why combining them in research can create knowledge that goes beyond what is possible using either source by itself." They go on to say:

> Oral traditions are narrative statements about the world as known by the group that maintains and transmits that knowledge from person to person. For scientists, including archaeologists, theory does the same thing; it is a statement about how the world works. In many ways oral tradition is akin to scientific theory. Both oral tradition and theory are subject to change when circumstances warrant. Oral tradition incorporates new experiences by layering new information into existing oral narratives. In this way, the new collective experience becomes incorporated into knowledge about how the world works. In science a theory is modified as a result of the learned experience from research (1997:78).

I have argued elsewhere (Harris 1995) that oral history and archaeology can be effectively combined. Oral history can locate sites of interest for archaeological investigation as well as providing interpretive information not available from archaeological sources.

Pawnee archaeologist, Roger Echo-Hawk, has discussed the historicity of oral narratives in a number of works. Although I agree with much that he has to say, I disagree on some points. Our differences of opinion derive, in part, from working with very different material. The stories he works with are more "mythological" in nature, the descriptions more vague. Unlike the *adaa'ox*, they do not seem to contain as much detailed information about locations which can still be identified, precise migration routes, the names of kin groups (which still exist) and individuals involved. Nor do the stories Echo-Hawk works with seem to have a very definite sense of chronology like that of the *adaa'ox*. I agree with Echo-Hawk's contention (2000:268) that replacing the term "prehistory" with "ancient history" would help to set a conceptual framework in which oral narratives could be recognized as historical in nature.

I have some difficulty with the tests Echo-Hawk sets out for determining the historicity of oral narratives. He suggests (2000:271) they must be "compatible" "with the general context of human history derived from other types of evidence." This seems reasonable except in cases where other types of evidence are seriously problematic, as in the Clovis-first model. The second test, I cannot argue with, which is that "the oral information must present a perspective on historical events that would be accepted by a reasonable observer" (Echo-Hawk 2000:271). Another point of disagreement I have with Echo-Hawk's tests for validity of oral narratives is that they seem to be entirely based on western scientific standards and do not investigate indigenous methodologies. Another place where I agree with Echo-Hawk is when (2000:287) he makes the point that academic emphasis on the study of culture change has contributed to a sense of disbelief when scholars are presented with oral knowledge which is claimed to be the product of a long record of cultural continuity. I can understand how incredulous it sounds to western scholars, when I tell them the Gitxsan or the Haida remember 12,000 years of history, but that does not mean that it is not true. A point Echo-Hawk makes of the most profound importance regarding the validity of oral histories in relating events which occurred in ancient times is as follows:

> Throughout the 20th century, scholars created and sustained an intensely competitive atmosphere of intellectual rigor in assessing models and evidence for the origins of Native Americans. If their presumptions about the lack of historicity in Indian origin stories is accurate, then the oral traditions presented in the chapters which follow are simply (and quite remarkably) coincidental in their depictions of long-vanished landscapes that can best be compared to the Pleistocene world (1994:10).

I believe Echo-Hawk's statement is very relevant to the examples I have provided. If the oral histories of the peoples of the northern Northwest Coast are myths rather than histories, then their correspondence with the scientific data is remarkably coincidental, indeed.

The picture of the peopling of the northern Northwest Coast from the archaeological evidence and supporting paleoenvironmental evidence has changed radically in just over two decades. Very exciting new discoveries change our understanding both incrementally and in giant leaps. Ackerman makes a critical point when he says, "the site record is scant and each new bit of information can have revolutionary impacts on colonization models" (1992:23). I would add that coming to a greater understanding of the peopling of the northern Northwest Coast by opening up our minds to new lines of inquiry, new forms of evidence and new ways of knowing also moves us toward the decolonization of our minds. For a long time we have been told that western science has a monopoly on the creation of knowledge, but I believe it is possible for both the colonized and the colonizer to move towards decolonizing their minds through deeper understanding. To truly understand what indigenous knowledge can contribute to the West, anthropologists and other experts on indigenous societies must make a serious commitment to learn from those they purport to be knowledgeable about.

Chapter 8

Conclusion: The Decolonization of Thought

An Indigenous Anthropology?

Although I am an indigenous person, I am also involved in the western academy as a doctoral student, teacher and researcher. Thesis writing, teaching in the university classroom, and research are not traditional indigenous enterprises. None of them can be undertaken while entirely following the tenets of indigenous worldviews. I can only point out the differences between indigenous and western values, worldviews, and methods of creating and transmitting knowledge. In my functioning as an academic, I cannot be entirely indigenous or entirely western, but must negotiate a space between those two positions. This is what I have done in the writing of this thesis, in my teaching, research and other scholarly activities.

Having said in the introduction to this thesis that I want to develop an indigenous anthropology, I now want to qualify that statement. Anthropology is a discipline which has been deeply entrenched in colonial ideology, with colonial theories and methods which I do not want to reproduce - the opposite, in fact. I want to contribute to the study of indigenous culture in a way which overturns erroneous convictions about indigenous knowledge. But, as the late Alfonso Ortiz, Tewa anthropologist, said, anthropology is the only discipline in which I could make a living studying culture

(Bosveld 1990:76).

A number of indigenous scholars have commented on the damage which can be done to indigenous peoples by misleading theories. Hammill and Cruz contend that the interests of indigenous people are being harmed by theory construction (1989). Eldon Yellowhorn states, "The construction of theory is typically seen as a hallmark of academic freedom, but unrestrained theory-building can be hostile to the well-being of Native people who find their past being manipulated for goals unrelated to their concerns" (1996:41). I agree wholly with Linda Smith when she says, "Indigenous peoples have been, in many ways, oppressed by theory" (1999:38). We have been oppressed by theories applied to us which we have not been able to understand and which have been devised with little or no input from us. We have been oppressed by theories which explain us in ways we do not recognize and we have been oppressed by theories which we have had very few opportunities to redress. Indigenous theorizing in academia is a new enterprise. Indigenous theory-building is grounded in the aboriginal experience rather than a western interpretation of indigenous experience. Smith argues that indigenous theory-building is important for helping us to make assumptions and predictions about the world, for helping us strategize our resistance, for understanding what we are being told and for predicting the consequences of what we are being promised (1999:38). This thesis is part of that indigenous theory-building exercise. I am attempting to create theory which can assist in the development of an explication of culture from an indigenous perspective.

It is not only western theoretical explanations of indigenous cultures that can be problematic. Substantive data has sometimes been untenable, as well. In many cases, where the substantive data is inaccurate, I would suggest, that it is as a result of interpretation by means of questionable theories. If one believes that Gitxsan houses are corporate entities created to exploit economic opportunities, rather than biological kinship units, then the use of another house's resources may look like a change in house membership - but that would not be correct. Fortunately, western scholars are increasingly willing to listen to, and believe, what indigenous people say about their cultures, rather than assuming the western scholar has a more objective and accurate understanding.

Indigenous knowledge only has value when it is understood as it was intended. For a non-culture member to endow a body of knowledge with meaning not intended or understood by those whose knowledge it is renders the information meaningless. Indigenous knowledge can be aggregated to create a greater understanding than that held by individual knowledge holders without rendering it inaccurate, so long as the meaning and intent is maintained, not distorted until no longer recognizable by those whose knowledge it was in the first place. The knowledge of indigenous peoples can be misinterpreted and analyzed to the point where its original meaning is lost, which is not useful to the scholar and can be damaging to indigenous peoples and their relationships with scholars. Young *et al.* (1989:3) say, "we have become increasingly convinced that in their attempt to understand the world many social scientists use methods and produce data that have very little to do with reality." Many indigenous people who have become objects of study would concur. Studies of indigenous knowledge can serve to create a more accurate portrayal of indigenous realities, a goal highly desired by many indigenous people, because improvement in the condition of indigenous lives, and improvement in the relationship between indigenous and western peoples can only be based on realities, not misconceptions.

Developing a New Research Ethic

Before embarking on the journey toward the development of an indigenous theory of culture, we must seriously consider research ethics from an indigenous perspective. Research has often been an offensive enterprise, largely because of a lack of consideration of the ethics of research from an indigenous perspective.

Because indigenous subjects of research have been speaking and writing back to the academic community, scholarly professional associations, universities and funding agencies have become very conscious of the ethical issues of research in recent years. This has led to the composition of ethics guidelines by such organizations. These sets of regulations, from the indigenous perspective, are written by them to protect us from them. Sometimes such regulations attain their goal, at other times they do not. These rules are usually written with little indigenous input. They are nearly always written with the belief that one set of rules is appropriate to all situations. This is not a safe assumption. As I mentioned previously, I have been asked on more than one occasion to obtain permission from a band or tribal council to do research in Gitxsan communities. This may be appropriate in some communities which consider band and tribal councils to be their legitimate political body. This is not appropriate in Gitxsan communities where the band councils are considered to be largely administrative bodies with no authority over hereditary chiefs. Another instance where ethical guidelines created by western institutions made little sense in an indigenous context occurred when a student of mine, who is Tahltan, was initially told he had to get permission from the ethics committee to interview his own father.

The members of ethics review committees have a difficult job. It is impossible to know the situation in all communities in which members of a professional association or university might undertake research. While it is important that communities be protected from insensitive and, more rarely, unscrupulous researchers, a generic set of rules cannot do that. Only communities have that ability. Some indigenous communities have written such guidelines, others have not. I believe there needs to be increased awareness on the part of those creating research ethics guidelines that universal rules will not work.

Although the face of anthropological research has changed greatly in the last thirty years, still in place is a largely unquestioned assumption that "indigenous peoples are the 'natural objects' of research" (Smith 1999:118) or "appropriate objects of scientific study" (Tsosie 1997:68). Many studies initiated by western scholars have little or no practical value to indigenous people, answering only the researcher's questions. As aboriginal communities take a greater interest in controlling research activities in their communities, researchers from outside the community are, and will become, more cognizant of this assumption and the implications of it. The implications are ones in which the West continues to maintain power over Others. Those Others are now sometimes refusing to accept that role, refusing to be the subjects of someone else's research, and are taking control of research in their communities. The future I see for anthropologists (including myself) interested in indigenous topics is primarily one of employee of indigenous communities and organizations.

As overtly imperialist attitudes have declined in western society in recent decades, the debate on the ethics of undertaking research on indigenous subjects has increased. The issues of confidentiality and consent have long been discussed. These may be important issues, but they only touch the surface of indigenous concern. Confidentiality and consent as conceived in scholarly debates are constructed based on western conceptions of individual rights and responsibilities. In this debate it is assumed that each individual has a right to provide and withhold information as he or she sees fit.

There is little recognition of the culturally specific views of ownership of knowledge property. In the case of the Gitxsan, the house is the primary corporate entity which owns many forms of property including property in knowledge which is considered profoundly important - the *adaa'ox*, for example, which are considered essential to the continued existence of the people.

Developing Indigenous Theory

In this thesis I have striven to demonstrate that awareness of indigenous theory and method can result in significant contributions to knowledge - to western knowledge and to indigenous knowledge. I hope my example of late Pleistocene-early Holocene oral histories demonstrates how bringing the two intellectual traditions together can result in a new synergism. Some western scholars are aware of the value of indigenous knowledge, but others remain steadfast in their belief that real knowledge can only be created by western scientific methodologies. One of my objectives in writing this dissertation was to add evidence to the argument that indigenous people have valid bodies of knowledge, created and maintained by their own methods. It is ironic that I assert that indigenous knowledge has its own methods of validation, but that I feel I must prove it by presenting scientific evidence which corroborates the oral histories. In entering into this somewhat hypocritical exercise, I hope that I will be able to provide the skeptical with some evidence of the validity of indigenous methods of knowledge creation.

I hope that my work demonstrates that indigenous scholarship has always existed in traditional forms. The oral histories on which I have focused in this dissertation are an example of such scholarship. They are a coherent, consistent, informative body of knowledge which has traditionally been held and passed on by experts. The method by which such traditional knowledge is transmitted is changing. The world in which indigenous people live is changing and they are acutely aware of that. The development of indigenous scholarship in contemporary forms is part of the process by which indigenous peoples are adapting to their changing situation. Indigenous people are gathering information to fulfill their community needs, they are gathering it by their own methods, interpreting it within their own worldview and presenting it in formats they consider appropriate. In this process they are utilizing both indigenous and western techniques and approaches in a new synthesis. The most important aspect of this undertaking being that information is gathered to serve the community rather than taken from the community to serve others.

In this thesis I have examined a body of oral historical knowledge which has been largely available to academia. What I have done differently is to consider it from an indigenous perspective; to look at this knowledge from a perspective which believes everything is alive, that all aspects of life affect each other, that does not believe in evolutionary principles, that believes the physical and spiritual worlds are not distinct, that everything occurs for a reason, that everything in the universe is related by a common essence, that believes time is not always linear, that gives precedence to subjectivity over objectivity, which prefers experience over rationality, which sees the world in terms of continuua rather than dualities, that does not see knowledge paradigmatically, that sees knowledge in qualitative rather than quantitative terms, that sees knowledge wholistically rather than in a reductionist manner, that reasons deductively rather than inductively. These differences in underlying worldview and theoretical framework can result in distinct interpretations by indigenous and western scholars looking at the same body of material. When considered from an indigenous perspective, the oral histories of the Gitxsan and their relatives change from being interesting myths which provide information about indigenous culture, values and worldview (possibly only in the present) to a very different body of information which can provide substantive data about a very ancient time period. Some of this information may be difficult to access by western methods. When taken seriously as history, these stories can provide insight into indigenous worldview, land tenure systems, conceptions of tangible and intangible property, methods of creating and transmitting knowledge, ancient social, economic and spiritual practices, languages, origins and migrations, intercultural relationships, paleoenvironmental and other types of data. This is a body of knowledge which the Gitxsan and their relatives have always had access to and which the West has usually denied. Ironically, western scholars have recently begun "proving" what the aboriginal peoples of the northern Northwest Coast have long known. Archaeological and paleoenvironmental research programs in the region have been producing new evidence every research season for several years which reinforces what the oral histories have said. The oral histories have described people living in the area when environmental conditions existed which, I believe, could only be those of the late Pleistocene. The descriptions are too detailed and too accurate for this to be coincidence.

The Indigenous Research Agenda

Being an indigenous person and an anthropologist is strangely ironic. Anthropology has a long history as a tool of colonialism, and I would argue, that some of those colonial attitudes are still maintained by some members of the discipline. Yet, I study anthropology because I believe it has value. I am aware that danger lies therein. On the one hand, I want to assist in the fulfilment of the indigenous research agenda, and on the other hand, to get into the position to do that well and to maintain my position as an academic, I must fulfill certain obligations to scholarship as defined by academic institutions. I am certain I pay a price for trying to fulfill these divergent sets of obligations, especially in the academy. But that is the choice I make in favouring the indigenous research agenda. I believe that the research enterprise is worthwhile for indigenous researchers because of the contributions they can make to scholarship. Our contributions can fulfill the needs of our communities and make a unique contribution to knowledge which comes from perspectives largely unheard in academia.

The number of indigenous researchers is growing in spite of the fact that, "the burdening of history makes the positioning of the indigenous person as researcher problematic," according to Smith (1999:107). This is undoubtably because the information needs of indigenous communities are great. Out of this need the field of indigenous research is developing. "It is a field which privileges indigenous concerns, indigenous practices and indigenous participation as researchers and researched" (Smith 1999:107). I have had the privilege of being involved in and witnessing the development of such indigenous research with the Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en communities. It began in the late 1970s with a desire to preserve cultural knowledge and burgeoned with *Delgamuukxw* preparation. Other communities have had similar experiences in which they fulfilled their own objective by their own methods, gathered a body of information useful for generations to come and increased the skill level of community members. The indigenous research agenda is nearly always a political one.

To be born into a colonized people is to be born into a highly politicized situation. Indigenous scholars, whether trained by the community, by the academy or both, are usually acutely aware of that. Rarely are indigenous individuals who become involved in the research exercise interested in status within the academy or the non-aboriginal community; the objective of indigenous researchers is usually the well-being of their communities. Colonized communities are communities which usually have a myriad of problems. Western society tells its members and its colonized peoples that poverty, crime, illness and other problems are individual issues with solutions based on the rehabilitation of individuals. Social programs are constructed to address issues from that perspective. When western social, educational and political institutions are very successful in their indoctrination they can convince their own members and the colonized not to question the institutions, but to place the blame for dysfunction on individuals. Because of the obvious disparity between the values of their own community and that of western society, many indigenous people, especially the more politically and socially aware, do not accept that proposition. When these individuals become involved in efforts to ameliorate social inequities their agendas usually involve the decolonization of their communities. Research with a decolonizing agenda has been called community action or emancipatory research (Frideres 1992; Robinson *et al.* 1994). It often involves deconstruction of western accounts of history and construction of accounts which represent the indigenous experience. Linda Smith describes this developing research agenda in the Maori context, saying that it "brings to the centre and privileges indigenous values, attitudes and practices" (1999:125). I attempt to present such a perspective in my work.

Decolonization efforts have been approached in many different ways by indigenous scholars and researchers. Some research issues are of an obviously political nature, others may be less obviously political but if they contribute to community well-being or cultural revitalization, they can be considered to be accomplishing political objectives.

Hawaiian scholar, Poka Laenui contends that "rediscovering one's history and recovering one's culture, language, identity, and so on is fundamental for the movement to decolonization" (2000:153). According to Linda Smith, the indigenous research agenda and that of scientific research programs have some commonalities but differing elements as well. Words like "healing," "decolonization," "spiritual" and "recovery" are rarely found in the research terminology of western science. These words are "too politically interested rather than neutral or objective" (Smith 1999:117). Indigenous people usually see all research projects in their communities as having political ends. The concept of knowledge for knowledge's sake is quite foreign to most indigenous ways of thinking. Knowledge is usually seen as having practical relevance for existence in a political situation.

An important part of the indigenous research agenda is capacity-building. Research is often considered to be concerned with more than the production of a product (a report), but is seen to be a process contributing to community development. Young people involved in research become more knowledgeable about their own culture and move towards becoming the elders of the next generation. Those who become involved in research develop useful skills which can assist them in gaining employment and can reduce the need for reliance on outside experts who may need much more preparation and training than community members. Information is gathered which contributes to the development of educational, social and other programs needed by the community. All of these needs as conceived by the community are much more efficiently fulfilled when research is conducted with the community's agenda in mind rather than that of a non-community member.

As the research agenda develops in indigenous communities, scholars from outside will probably find it increasingly difficult to work in those communities if their research agenda and that of the community do not coincide. Alternatively, non-indigenous scholars who are sensitive to the research agendas of communities may find themselves in long and mutually satisfying relationships with communities.

One of the most common critiques leveled at researchers from outside the indigenous community is that they return little to the community, including information. In recent years more and more indigenous communities have been demanding that the information gathered in their communities be made available to them in a meaningful way. A major impetus for this demand has been community education needs. When information is gathered, aboriginal communities often want to be able to disseminate it to their members. The Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en have commissioned the writing of several documents in plain English for community members following research projects. One such document I wrote (Harris 1989) is still in use as a text in various educational programs. I have also been contracted by the Wet'suwet'en to write a research handbook for community researchers and have been asked by Treaty 8 B.C. to make a presentation suggesting how their communities can utilize information gathered in a traditional land use study. Other communities involved in archaeology projects have produced, in addition to site reports, well illustrated, simply written documents which can be read by most community members (Friesen 1998; Gotthardt and Hare 1994; Hammer and Hare n.d.; Hare and Greer 1994). Linda Smith takes the idea of sharing information further, emphasizing that researchers need to share more than information, but to share knowledge. She says that researchers have a responsibility to share more than "surface information but to share theories and analyses which inform the way knowledge and information are constructed and represented" (Smith 1999:16). To do this, she says, is to demystify, to decolonize (ibid).

Education, Indigenous Studies Programs and the Development of Indigenous Scholarship

Although indigenous people are often suspicious of western education because they are aware of its role in colonization, they are also often aware that it can be a valuable tool for them. Indigenous people are aware that western education has been a significant factor in the erosion of traditional education and socialization; that it has been an instrumental contributor to the erosion of indigenous cultures. They are also aware that the West and its institutions are a fact of indigenous life today. Many indigenous people see a western education as a tool which can be used to improve conditions in indigenous communities. Some see a western education expressly as a weapon which can be turned against the colonizers. The fear remains, though, that those participating in the system will become co-opted by it. Some indigenous communities have come to a more comfortable accommodation with the western education system than others. Those with strong traditional forms of government and strong cultures may more easily resist co-optation and may use their western education effectively to fight colonization.

In spite of the perceived value, the experience of higher education can be a distressing experience for indigenous students. Indigenous students attend universities because they see the benefits which can derive, but they often feel they pay a high price for their education. They may find the content of the courses conflicting with what they have been taught, the values and philosophies foreign, and the punitive nature of western education disturbing. Older or more traditional community members may be concerned that the years young people spend in western educational institutions are years not spent learning about their own culture. Smith contends that indigenous communities may want their young people to gain western educations, "But they do not want this to be achieved at the cost of destroying people's indigenous identities, their languages, values and practices" (1999:134). Many indigenous people working in professional positions in their communities do so without the benefit of advanced western education, sometimes because of lack of success, at other times, because of negative attitudes about the institution.

Indigenous peoples often consider universities elitist institutions from which they are excluded, and the small number of indigenous university graduates in Canada and other countries with colonized populations would indicate that they are correct. According to Linda Smith, in New Zealand, "For indigenous peoples universities are rather elite institutions which reproduce themselves through various systems of privilege" and "many indigenous students find little space for indigenous perspectives in most academic disciplines and most research approaches" (1999:129). In Canada, the movement of indigenous people into the academy has been exceedingly slow. The obstacles are insurmountable for most and nearly so for many others. I could go on at great length about the difficulties faced by aboriginal people trying to participate in academia, suffice it to say that those difficulties are reflected in the number of aboriginal people currently involved in academia. In spite of this, the number of aboriginal people attending university, graduating at all levels and entering academia is growing. Some programs which have helped aboriginal students access universities and be successful there include: band funding programs, transition programs for aboriginal students, service programs for aboriginal students, native studies or First Nations studies programs and community involvement in the university. All of these can help make aboriginal students feel more comfortable within the university.

Although native studies programs do help to bring aboriginal students into the university, they can be seen as a two-edged sword. I am more inclined to see them positively but others do not. I have found the First Nations studies program in which I work a safe place to develop a unique indigenous scholarship, but have come to realize as I have spoken to other indigenous scholars within the academy that mine is a fairly atypical position. Another indigenous scholar who seems to consider such programs positively is Linda Smith. She says of such programs, "university researchers who work within the protection of such notions as academic freedom and academic research can legitimate innovative, cutting-edge approaches which can privilege community-based projects" (1999:125). Ward Churchill, on the other hand, warns of the dangers of such programs being "ghetto-ized" and those who teach in them being marginalized within the academy (1995a:245). Annette Jaimes sees Native American studies as "generally isolated both within the academic environment and from its own cultural roots" (1987:4). Russell Thornton contends that Native American studies should have emerged as an important intellectual area, but has failed to do so primarily because of lack of political will and support on the part of academic institutions (1998b:98-99). Elizabeth Cook-Lynn has a particularly harsh criticism of Native American Studies as a discipline. She contends that the intellectual strategies of such programs are far more heavily influenced by universities, the social science disciplines and publishers than they are by indigenous communities (1997:19). Cook-Lynn says that the dominating interests of non-native social scientists in their teaching and research "leave little room for the voice of Native America except as 'victim' or 'other' or 'informant'" (1997:19). Under these circumstances, she contends, the "curriculum is developed as 'ethnowhatever'" and "Natives continue to be objectified, and colonialism is fostered instead of deconstructed" (1997:20). On the positive side, Cook-Lynn says, that Native American Studies can be meaningful because "it challenges almost everything that America has to offer in education and society" (1997:25). Essentially, what all of these indigenous scholars say about indigenous studies in academia is that it could be a place where indigenous knowledge could be developed but has largely failed to do so because those in charge of policy and financial decisions at such institutions have not seen indigenous studies as a legitimate discipline and, therefore, have not supported it adequately.

Possibly the most significant problem for indigenous studies programs in western academic institutions is that they are still primarily shaped and controlled by non-indigenous scholars and administrators. I am not saying that there is no place for non-indigenous scholars in indigenous studies. Many non-indigenous scholars have made significant contributions to indigenous studies. What I am saying is that many indigenous studies programs are dominated by western ideologies which inhibit the development of indigenous scholarship. When I refer to indigenous scholarship I refer to scholarship based on indigenous epistomologies, developed by indigenous methodologies and presented in indigenous formats. Information about indigenous peoples presented from the perspectives of the western disciplines of anthropology, history, sociology, psychology and so on, does not present an indigenous perspective. These disciplines are constrained by the general tenets of western thinking, scientific thinking, academic standards of scholarship and the theoretical orientations of their disciplines. These ways of creating knowledge have, of course, been very productive, but have not always produced very reliable data on indigenous societies from the perspective of indigenous peoples. The disparities between the reality perceived by indigenous people and the reality presented in the writings of non-indigenous scholars about indigenous people can be significant. Even those who specialize in indigenous studies, often are not sufficiently informed to be able to judge "what might count as appropriate and worthwhile in the indigenous arena" (Smith 1999:131). This is certainly not always the case, but is a common complaint of indigenous scholars working within indigenous studies programs.

Probably all university departments can rightfully complain from time to time about lack of support and understanding by administrators, but the problem is bound to be more acute in indigenous studies programs since, in addition to the special requirements of their discipline, indigenous studies programs attempt to present an indigenous perspective which administrators are likely to be unfamiliar with. If an indigenous studies program does not present an indigenous perspective (and many do not) I would consider it anthropology or history or some other kind of program, rather than indigenous studies. Although indigenous studies programs which claim to be interdisciplinary are taking a step in the right direction towards presenting a more complete picture of indigenous cultures and issues, I would contend that indigenous studies is not disciplinary at all. I purport that the holism of the indigenous perspective precludes the concept of discipline.

Indigenous Scholars: Negotiating Space in the Academy and in the Community

The position of the indigenous scholar is a complex one. The indigenous scholar positions him or herself within sets of imperatives which are often contradictory. Not only must the indigenous scholar mediate between the two systems of knowledge in which he or she has been trained, but he or she must negotiate a space within the university and the community. Indigenous research and scholarship are political activities, not only because of the needs of indigenous communities, but because of the difficulty indigenous scholars have in negotiating space in the academy. As an indigenous scholar, I consider the transforming of scholarly practices as one of my most important objectives. In my research, writing and teaching I strive to reconstruct academic practices in ways that make more sense to me and, hopefully, to other indigenous people. If I am successful in this endeavour, indigenous knowledge new to the West will be brought to academia by new methods, but it is only with great difficulty that this can be achieved by me or by other indigenous scholars. In presenting an indigenous perspective to the academy, indigenous scholars are disrupting orthodoxy in a way which is more profound even than the presentation of a new paradigm within western scholarship. The indigenous scholar is asking for recognition of an entirely distinct worldview. Such a radical departure will inevitably result in reaction. Such reactions can include marginalization and exclusion of the indigenous scholar. Linda Smith lists some of the "exclusionary devices" used to dismiss the work of indigenous scholars as including the accusations that indigenous research is " 'not rigorous,' 'not robust,' 'not real,' 'not theorized,' 'not valid,' 'not reliable'" (1999:140).

It is not only within the academy that the indigenous researcher must negotiate space. Because of the generally unsatisfactory experience indigenous communities have had with western researchers, indigenous researchers must often overcome a legacy of distrust in their own communities. It is not just the academy which can be unaccepting of indigenous researchers, but their own communities can be as well. Ambivalence is often expressed towards those indigenous people who become involved in academia. Many indigenous community members are not familiar with the exact nature of the academic's role. Indigenous people have often experienced researchers as aggressive, domineering thieves of cultural property and fear that their own people may act in the same way if they become researchers. The academy rejects them for being indigenous and the indigenous community rejects them for being western. Indigenous researchers must meet the criteria of academia and the criteria of the indigenous community as well. The work of those scholars who do not meet indigenous criteria may be judged "'not useful,' 'not indigenous,' 'not friendly,' 'not just'" (Smith 1999:140).

In contending that the Gitxsan and their relatives remember 12,000 years of history, I knowingly challenge a western readership to open their minds to what, no doubt, initially seems highly improbable. If readers new to this material can be convinced that there are strong correlations between the oral histories and the paleoenvironmental and archaeological evidence, they may be more receptive to the idea that other kinds of data contained within the oral histories may be valid. They may also be more receptive to the idea that other bodies of indigenous knowledge may be worth examining. Such acceptance might engender greater respect for those who created the knowledge. Colonization can only occur when those deprived of their property and their rights are accorded so little respect as to be dehumanized. Every contribution to scholarship or other forms of human endevour that help to increase understanding of, and respect for, indigenous people, contributes to the process of decolonization. In writing this thesis it is my aim to negotiate my space within the academy, to remain connected to the community and to contribute to decolonization which is the ultimate project.

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